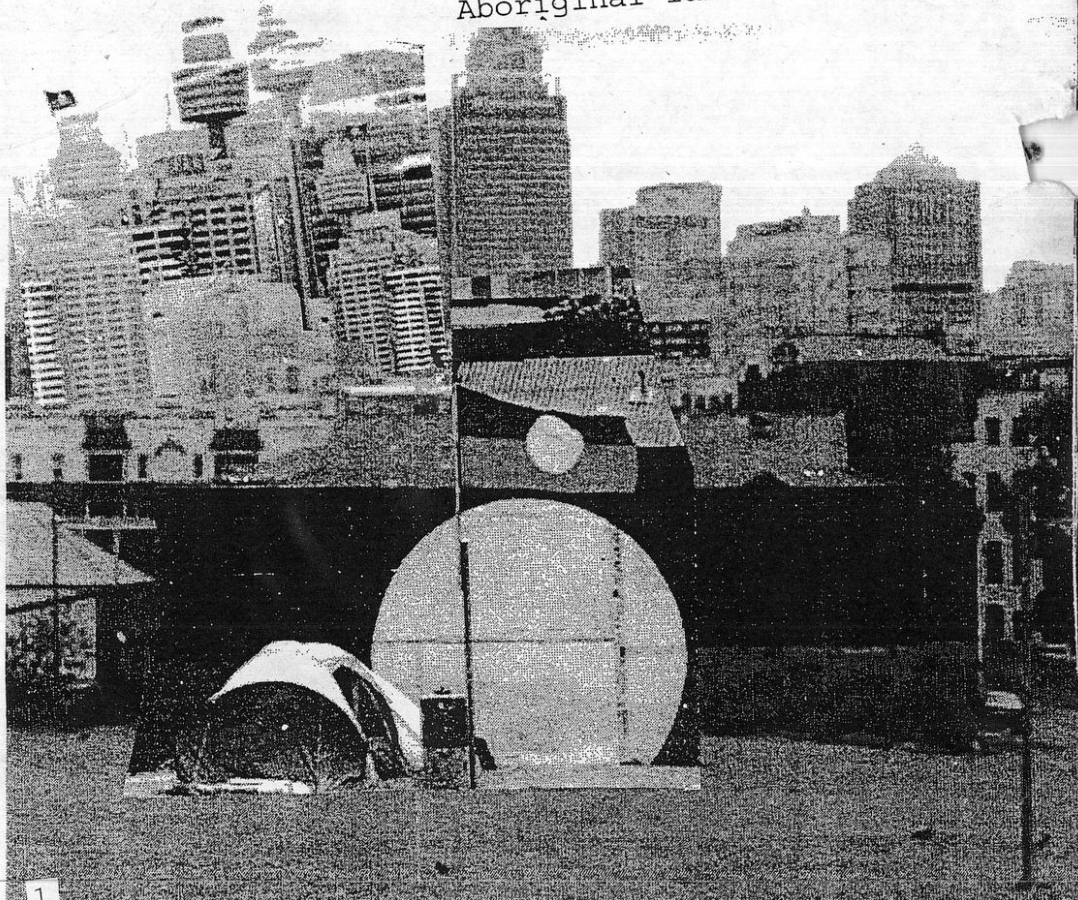
on Whiteness
one of our movies. The fun hasn't rea
remember holding

This zine was written on the land
of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation.

I would like to acknowledge that this land
was never ceded
and that a treaty
was never made.

This always was
and always will be
Aboriginal land.



This is a reflective journal of my experiences during a course on whiteness and identity.

This zine is an attempt to share some of the things I've learnt, to share my thoughts and start conversation around this topic.

This font is me talking.

Anything in biro is me talking.

Anything written in Arial or Times New Roman or any other fancy font is a quote.

References are on my blog

http://growyourownfood.wordpress.com

I'd love to hear your thoughts on this stuff.

please email me at

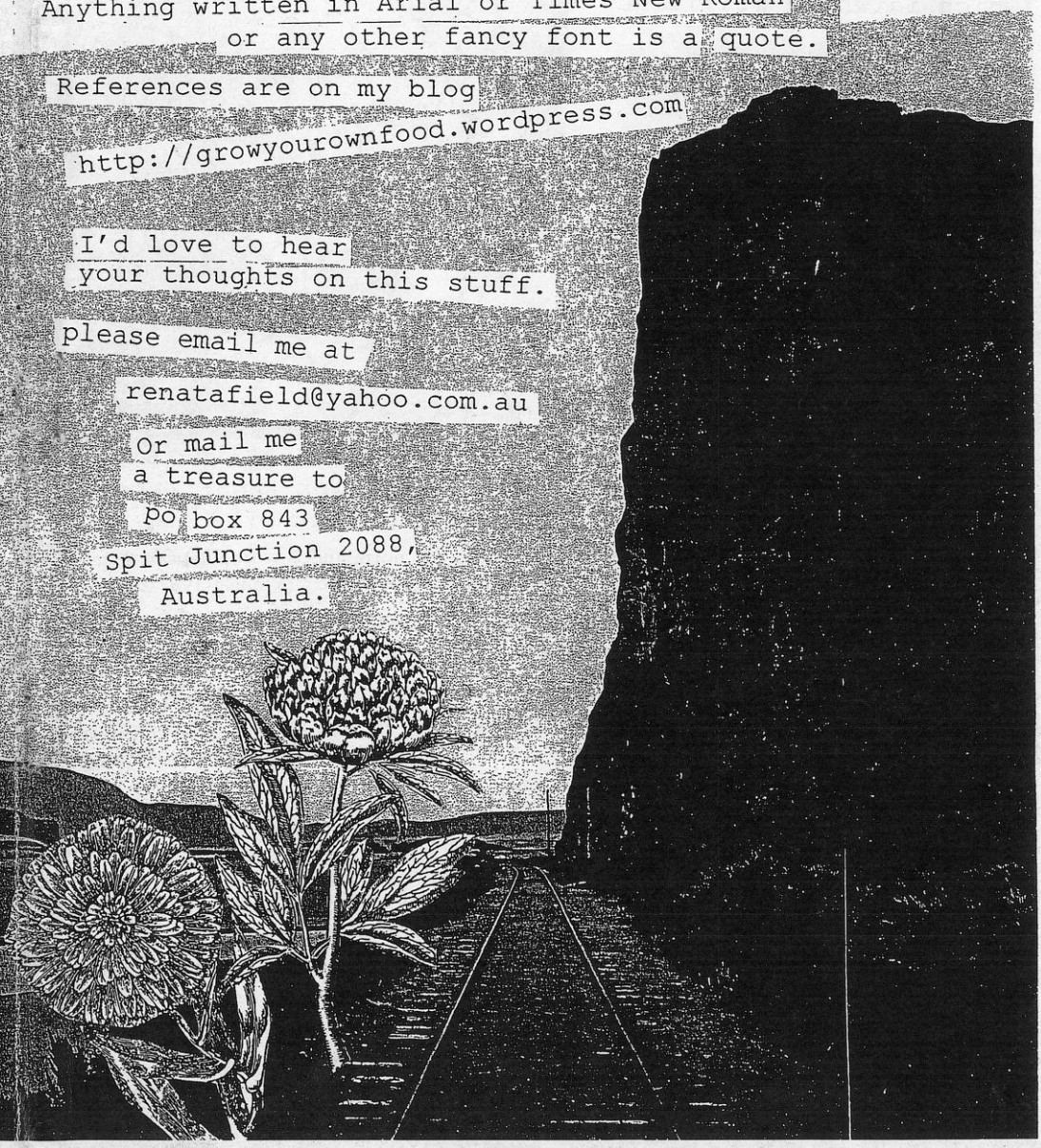
renatafield@yahoo.com.au

Or mail me a treasure to

po box 843

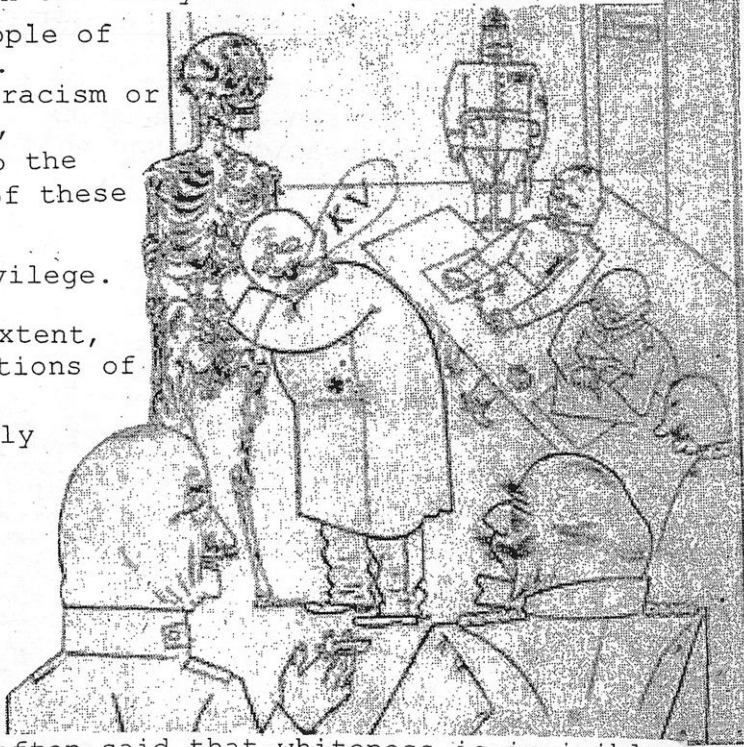
Spit Junction 2088,

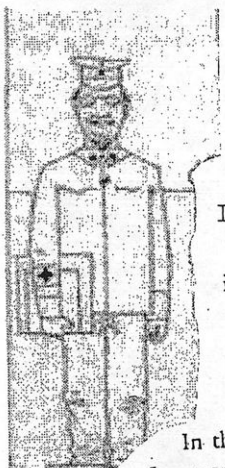
Australia.



Whiteness emerged in the early 90's as an academic field, largely through people of colour in the USA.
Rather than examine racism or reconciliation, whiteness cuts to the systematic causes of these problems, which is white privilege.

It examines the extent, causes and implications of whiteness, and works especially through awareness raising, to reduce this.





It is often said that whiteness is invisible. If you ask people what they think about whiteness, they may not understand it at all.

in the West, whiteness defines itself as the norm and is what allows us to see the deficient and the abnormal without itself being seen' (Montag 1997:291).

Whiteness is the assumed norm, against which other races and skin colours are compared.

In this way whiteness is constitutive of the epistemology of the West; it is an invisible regime of power that secures hegemony through discourse and has material effects in everyday life.

*Aileen Moreton-Robinson*

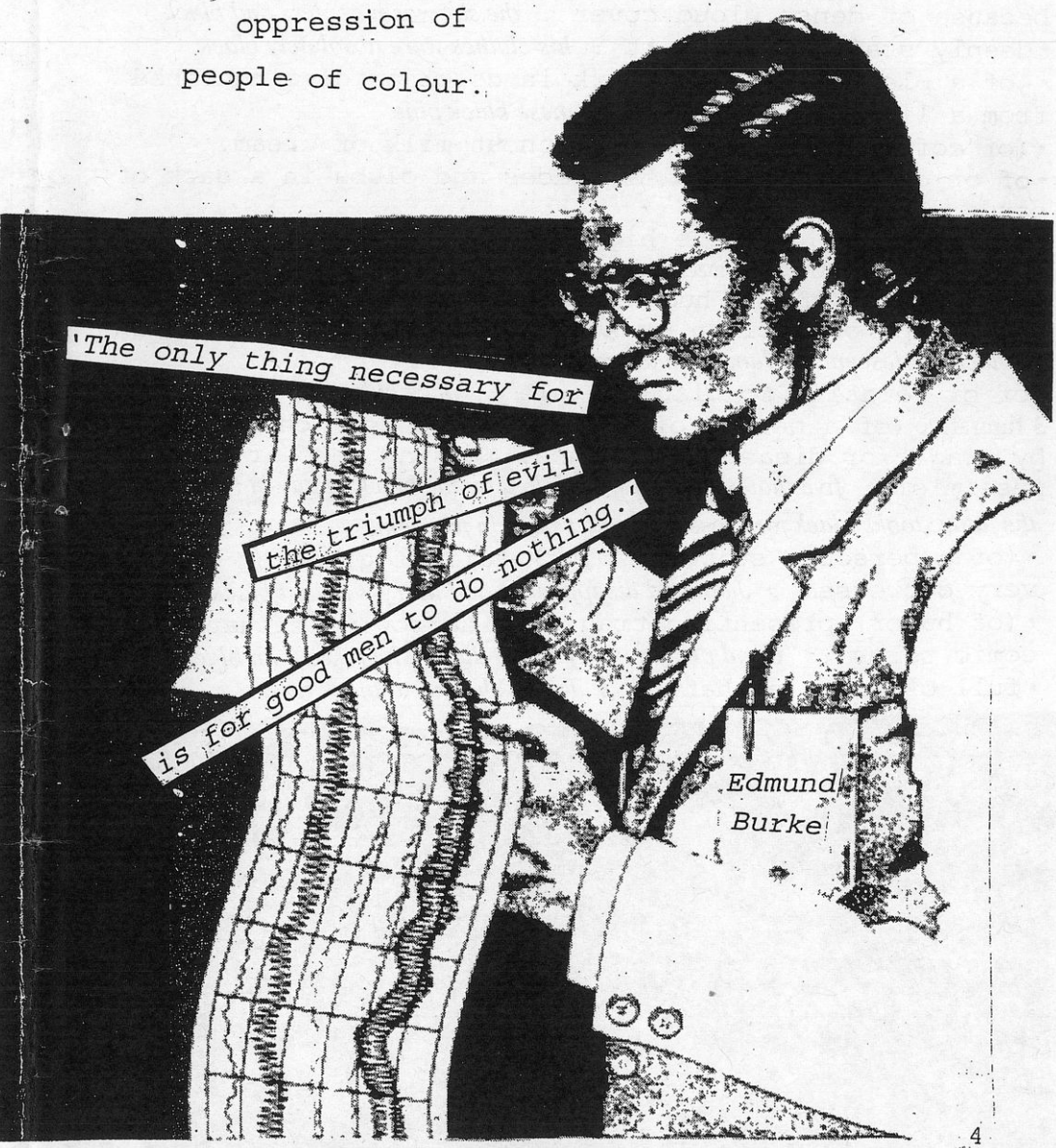
This is how it was for me, however, once I started to notice whiteness, I noticed it everywhere. Whiteness is so blindingly obvious; I couldn't believe that I hadn't noticed it before. It's like seeing everything but the water in the ocean. This occurs because white people like me aren't frequently asked to address our whiteness.

Our privilege is accepted everywhere, from politics to pop-culture. I dare say whiteness wouldn't be called invisible to a person of colour who must encounter its' ramifications every day. Whiteness is not invisible,

Studying whiteness is confronting.

It's challenging to realise the extent to which white people are privileged in society;

to realise that by being white and doing nothing, you are involved in the oppression of people of colour.



# black |blak| black |blak|

adjective

**1** of the very darkest color; the opposite of white; colored like coal, due to the absence of or complete absorption of light : *black smoke* | *her hair was black.*

• (of the sky or night) completely dark due to nonvisibility of the sun, moon, or stars, normally because of dense cloud cover : *the sky was moonless and black.*

• deeply stained with dirt : *his clothes were absolutely black.*

• (of a plant or animal) dark in color as distinguished from a lighter variety : *Japanese black pine.*

• (of coffee or tea) served without milk or cream.

• of or denoting the suits spades and clubs in a deck of cards.

• (of a ski run) of the highest level of difficulty, as indicated by black markers positioned along it.

**2** (also **Black**) of any human group having dark-colored skin, esp. of African or Australian Aboriginal ancestry : *black adolescents of Jamaican descent.*

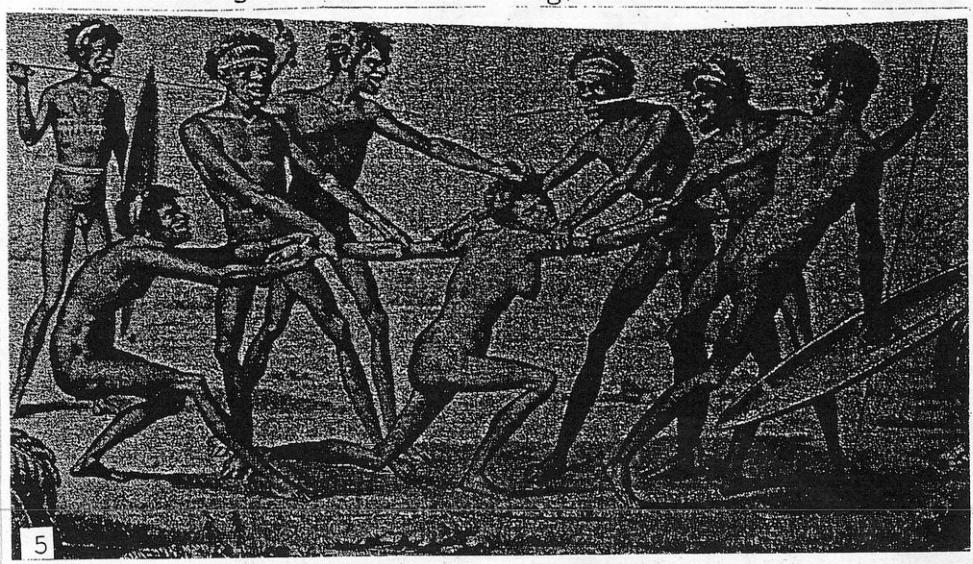
• of or relating to black people : *black culture.*

**3** figurative (of a period of time or situation) characterized by tragic or disastrous events; causing despair or pessimism : *five thousand men were killed on the blackest day of the war* | *the future looks black for those of us interested in freedom.*

• (of a person's state of mind) full of gloom or misery; very depressed : *Jean had disappeared and Mary was in a black mood.*

• (of humor) presenting tragic or harrowing situations in comic terms : *"Good place to bury the bodies," she joked with black humor.*

• full of anger or hatred : *Roger shot her a black look.*



A 'marriage' ceremony. Freycinet
*Voyage autour du Monde* (1824–44)

• archaic very evil or wicked : *my soul is steeped in the blackest sin.*

noun

**1** black color or pigment : *a tray decorated in black and green | a series of paintings done only in grays and blacks.*

• black clothes or material, often worn as a sign of mourning : *dressed in the black of widowhood.*

• darkness, esp. of night or an overcast sky : *the only thing visible in the black was the light of the lantern.*

**2** (also **Black**) a member of a dark-skinned people, esp. one of African or Australian Aboriginal ancestry : *a coalition of blacks and whites against violence.*

**3** (in a game or sport) a black piece or ball, in particular

• (often **Black**) the player of the black pieces in chess or checkers.

• the black pieces in chess.

verb [ trans. ]

make black, esp. by the application of black polish : *blacking the prize bull's hooses.*

• make (one's face, ha- ther visible parts one's body) black keup. go as seen at night o

• black person ir *extras blacking up th*

PHRASES

**black someone's eye** bruising.

**in the black** (of a money; solvent

**look on the black si**

**not as black as one** be.

PHRASAL VERI

**black out** (of loss of c

**black somet** or comple an air att to show a *blacked out.* • *Chicago was b* completely re : 2 obs something read or see. : *the license plate had been* out with masking tape. • (of a television company) suppress the broadcast of a program : *they blacked out the women's finals on local television.*

# white |(h)wīt| white |(h)wīt|

adjective

**1** of the color of milk or fresh snow, due to the reflection of most wavelengths of visible light; the opposite of black : *a sheet of white paper.*

• approaching such a color; very pale : *her face was white with fear.*

• figurative morally or spiritually pure; innocent a
untainted : *he is as pure and white as the driven snow.*

• (of a plant) having white flowers or pale-col
fruit.

• (of a tree) having light-colored bark.

• (of wine) made from white grapes, or dark gr
the skins removed, and having a yellowish co

• Brit. (of coffee or tea) served with milk or

• (of glass) transparent; colorless.

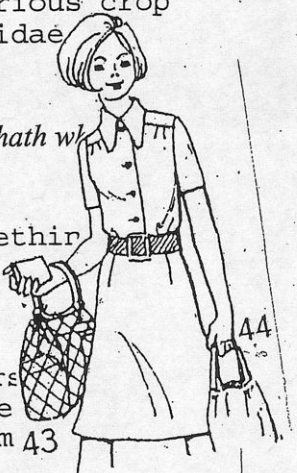
• (of bread) made from a light-colored, sifted, or bleached flour.

**2** (also **White**) belonging to or denoting a human group having light-colored skin (chiefly used of peoples of European extraction) : *a white farming community.*

• of or relating to such people : *white Australian culture.*

3 historical counter-revolutionary or reactionary. Contrasted

noun
**1** white color or pigment : *garnet-red flowers flecked with white | the woodwork was an immaculate white.*
• white clothes or material : *he was dressed from head to foot in white.*
• (**whites**) white clothes, esp. as worn for playing tennis, or as naval uniform, or in the context of washing : *wash whites separately.*
• white wine.
• (**White**) the player of the white pieces in chess or checkers.
• the white pieces in chess.
• a white thing, in particular the white ball (the cue ball) in billiards.
• the outer part (white when cooked) that surrounds the yolk of an egg; the albumen.
• white bread : *tuna on white.*
**2** the visible pale part of the eyeball around the iris.
**3** (also **White**) a member of a light-skinned people, esp. one of European extraction.
**4** [with adj. ] a white or cream butterfly that has dark veins or spots on the wings. It can be a serious crop pest. • Pieris and other genera, family Pieridae; also **cabbage white** .
verb [ trans. ] archaic
paint or turn (something) white : *your passion hath wh face.*
PHRASES
**bleed someone/something white** drain someone or somethir wealth or resources.
**whited sepulcher** poetic/literary a hypocrite. [ORIGIN: biblical allusion to Matt. 23:27.]
**white man's burden** the task that white colonizers they had to impose their civilization on the inhabitants of their colonies. [ORIGIN: from Kipling's *The White Man's Burden* (1899).]
**whiter than white** extremely white. • morally beyond reproach.
PHRASAL VERBS
**white out** (of vision) become impaired by exposure to sudden bright light. • (of a person) lose color vision as a prelude to losing consciousness.
**white something out 1** obliterate a mistake with white correction fluid. • cover one's face or facial blemishes completely with makeup. **2** impair someone's vision with a sudden bright light.

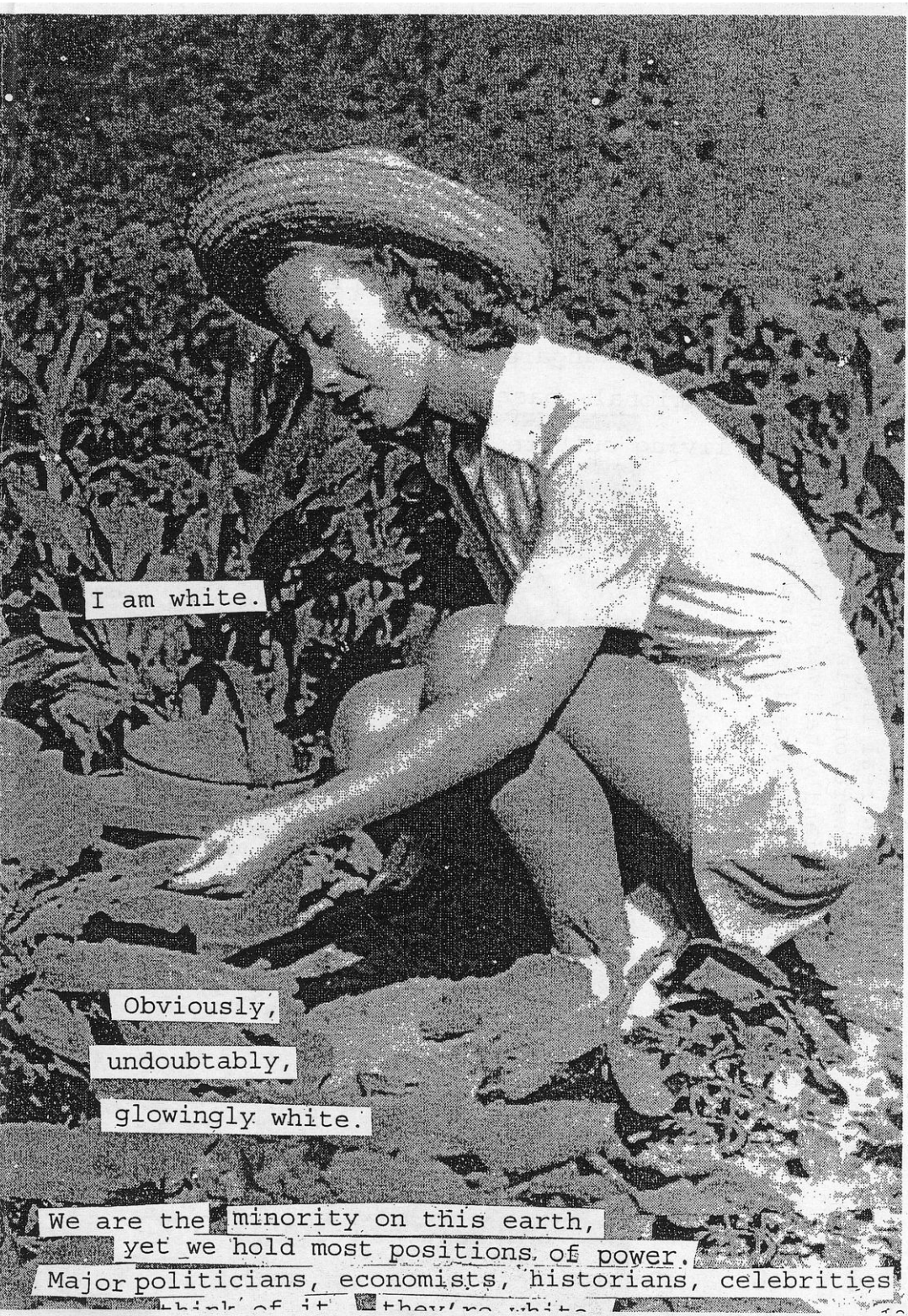


Black and white aren't black and white terms.

White/black
Pure/impure
Clean/dirty
Good/evil
Human/animal
Christian/heathen
Master/slave
Moral/depraved
Enlightened/pagan
Culture/nature
Intellectual/physical
Order/chaos
Future/past
Scientific/superstitious
Powerful/powerless

what is black?
Dirty, primitive,
uncivilised,

What is white?
Pure, clean,
innocent, right

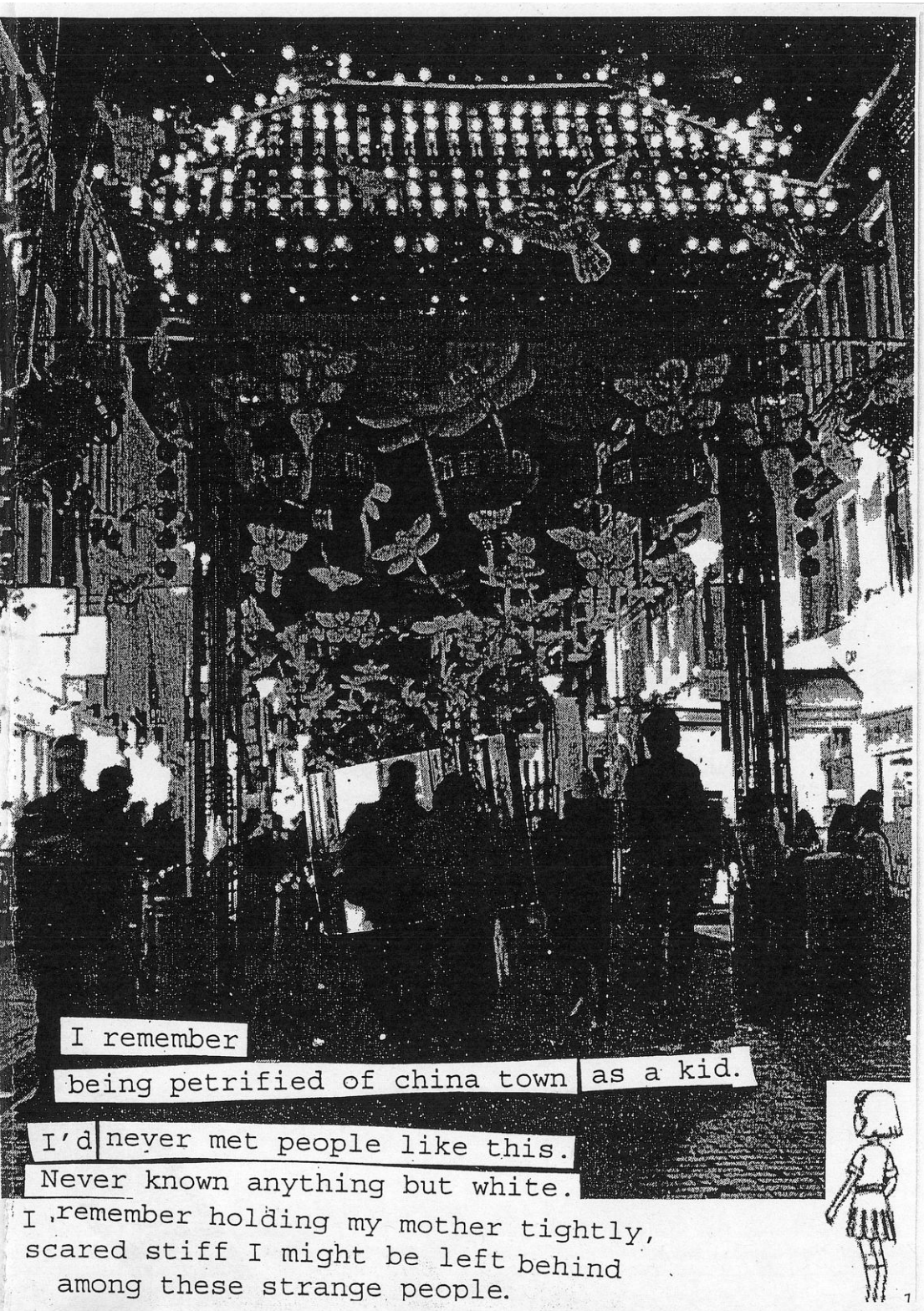

I am white.
Obviously,
undoubtably,
glowingly white.
We are the minority on this earth,
yet we hold most positions of power.
Major politicians, economists, historians, celebrities

I grew up in the Blue Mountains.
It's Aboriginal land,
but it's currently very white up there.
I don't remember any people of colour
when I was growing up.

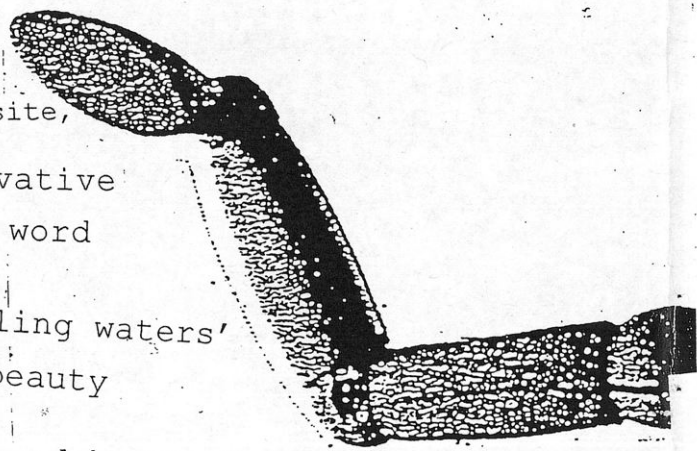
The first time I remember meeting Aboriginal people
was at a school BBQ, where they danced for us
and cooked up kangaroo meat.

It was traditional, past tense,
not a living culture.

This was a bit confusing, seeing real live Aboriginal people. Because I thought they were only in the past, in the history books; the friendly natives who the explorers met as they bravely discovered Australia.


I remember
being petrified of china town as a kid.
I'd never met people like this.
Never known anything but white.
I remember holding my mother tightly,
scared stiff I might be left behind
among these strange people.

I was born in Katoomba
in Dharug/Gundungurra country,



According to the
Blue Mountains tourist site,

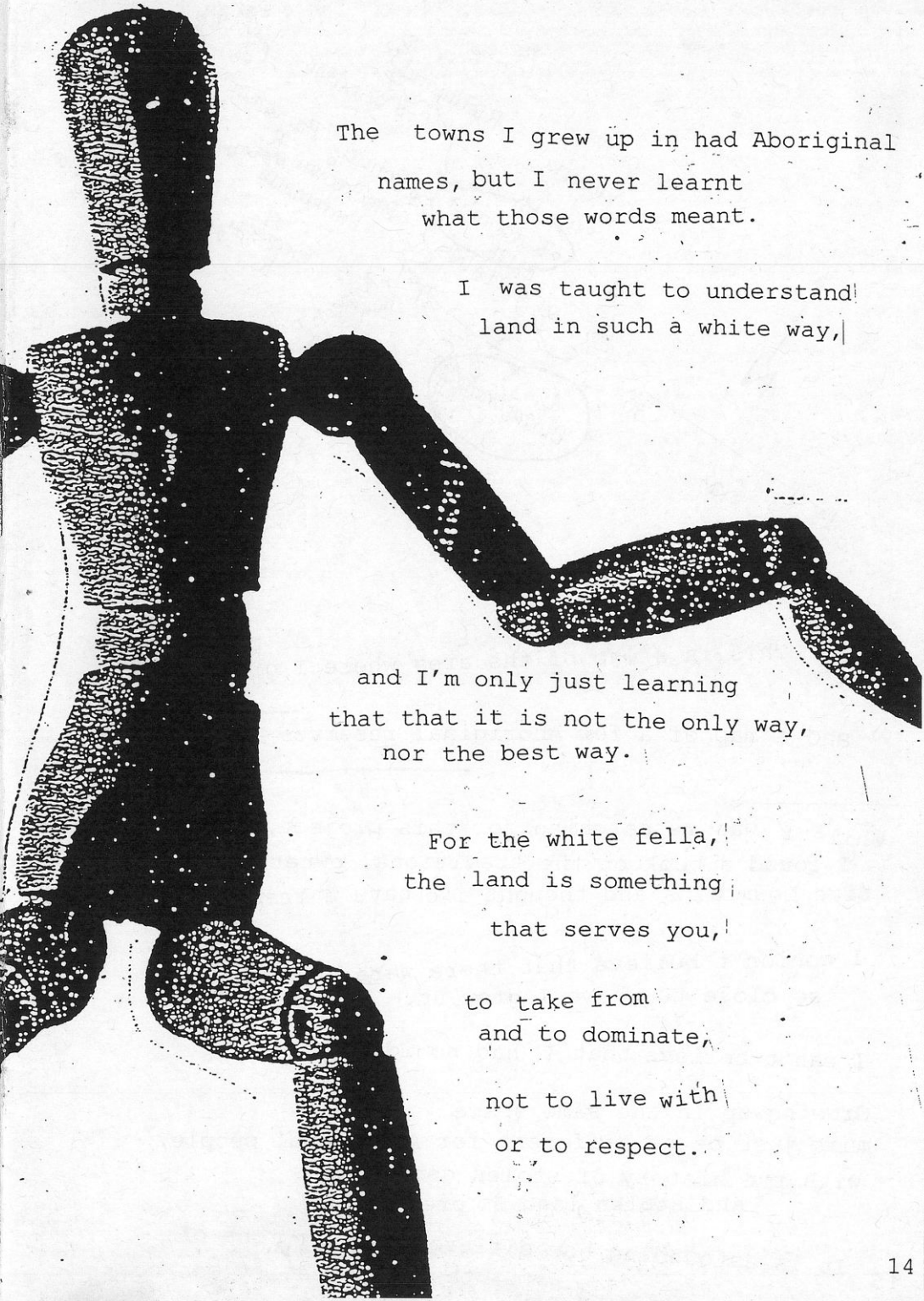
Katoomba is a derivative
of the Aboriginal word
'Kedumba'
meaning 'shiny, falling waters'
after the natural beauty
of the area.

I learnt about the natural beauty of the area.
as a kid we went for bushwalks,
and I observed all the tourists,
but I never really thought about whom the land really
belonged to, or what it meant.

(( There is so much to be learned from Aboriginal people—about land management, about the species of the continent, about relationships among living things and the seasonal forces, about how to understand human society as a part of living systems, taking humanity seriously without making of it the centre of creation. ))

Deborah Bird Rose . 1996.

I've since learnt a little about
how intrinsic land is to Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander
peoples, and how much it means; as a
place of identity, for learning, food,
spirituality and so much more.



The towns I grew up in had Aboriginal
names, but I never learnt
what those words meant.

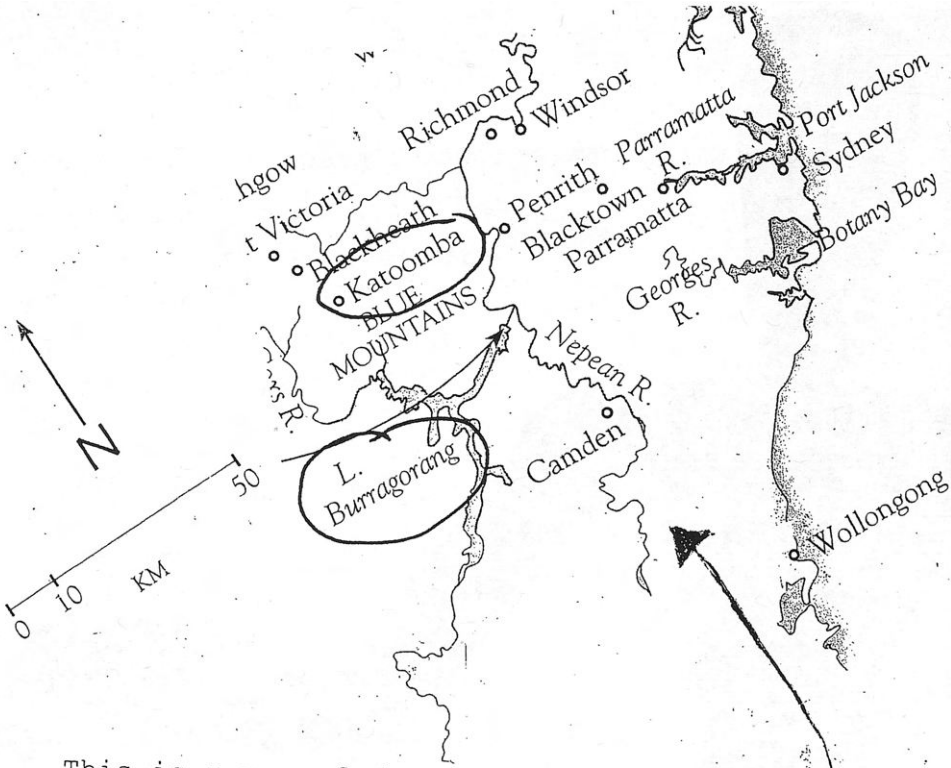
I was taught to understand
land in such a white way,

and I'm only just learning
that that it is not the only way,
nor the best way.

For the white fella,
the land is something
that serves you,

to take from
and to dominate,

not to live with
or to respect.




This is a map of the area where I grew up,

and a map of a few Aboriginal reserves in the area.

While I was researching for this project,
I found a book on the traditional owners of the Blue Mountains and thought I'd have a read.

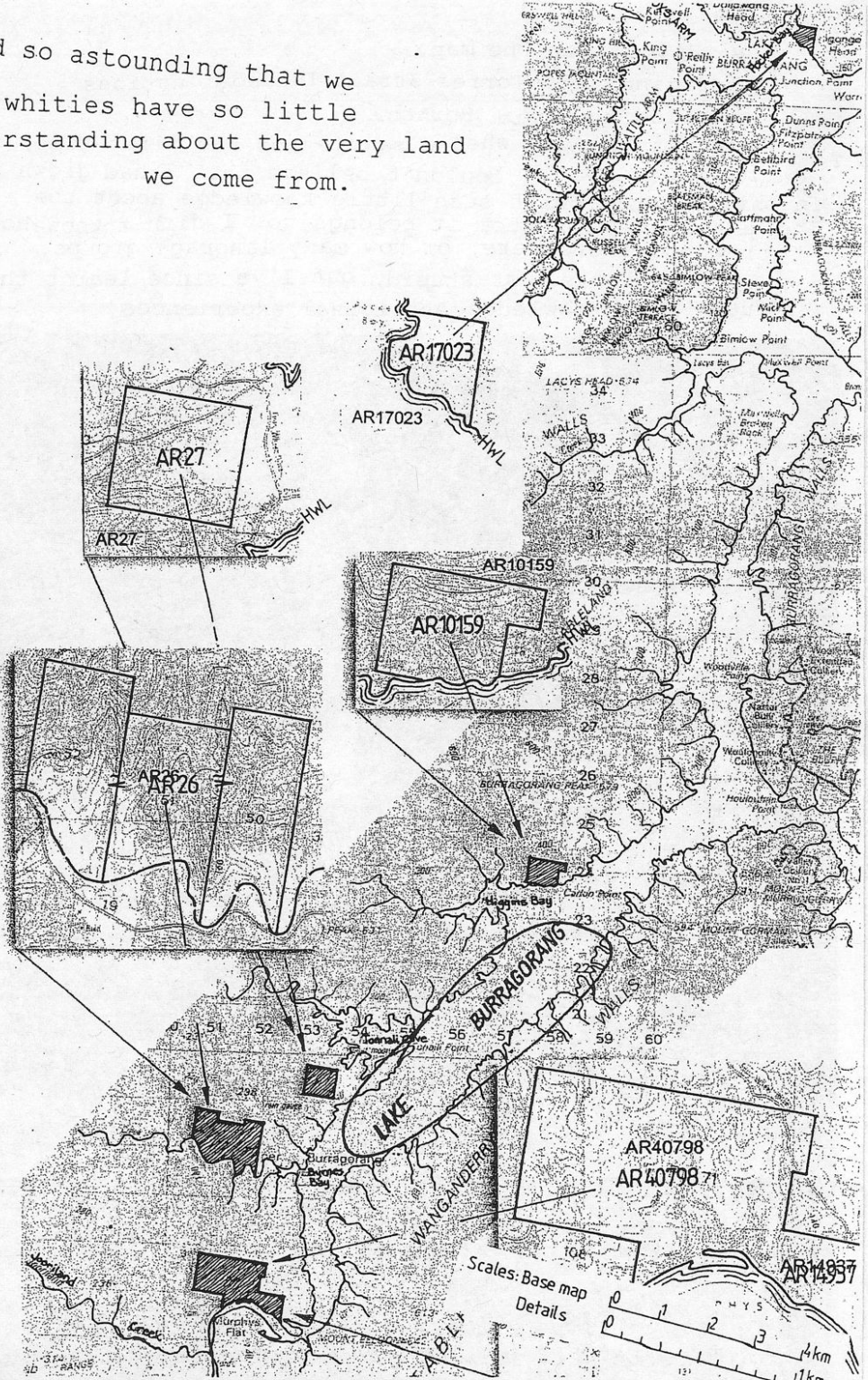
I couldn't believe that there were missions,
so close to where I grew up.

I can't believe that I had no idea.

Growing up in the same space
must just be so different for Aboriginal people,
with the history of stolen generations
and stolen land so present.

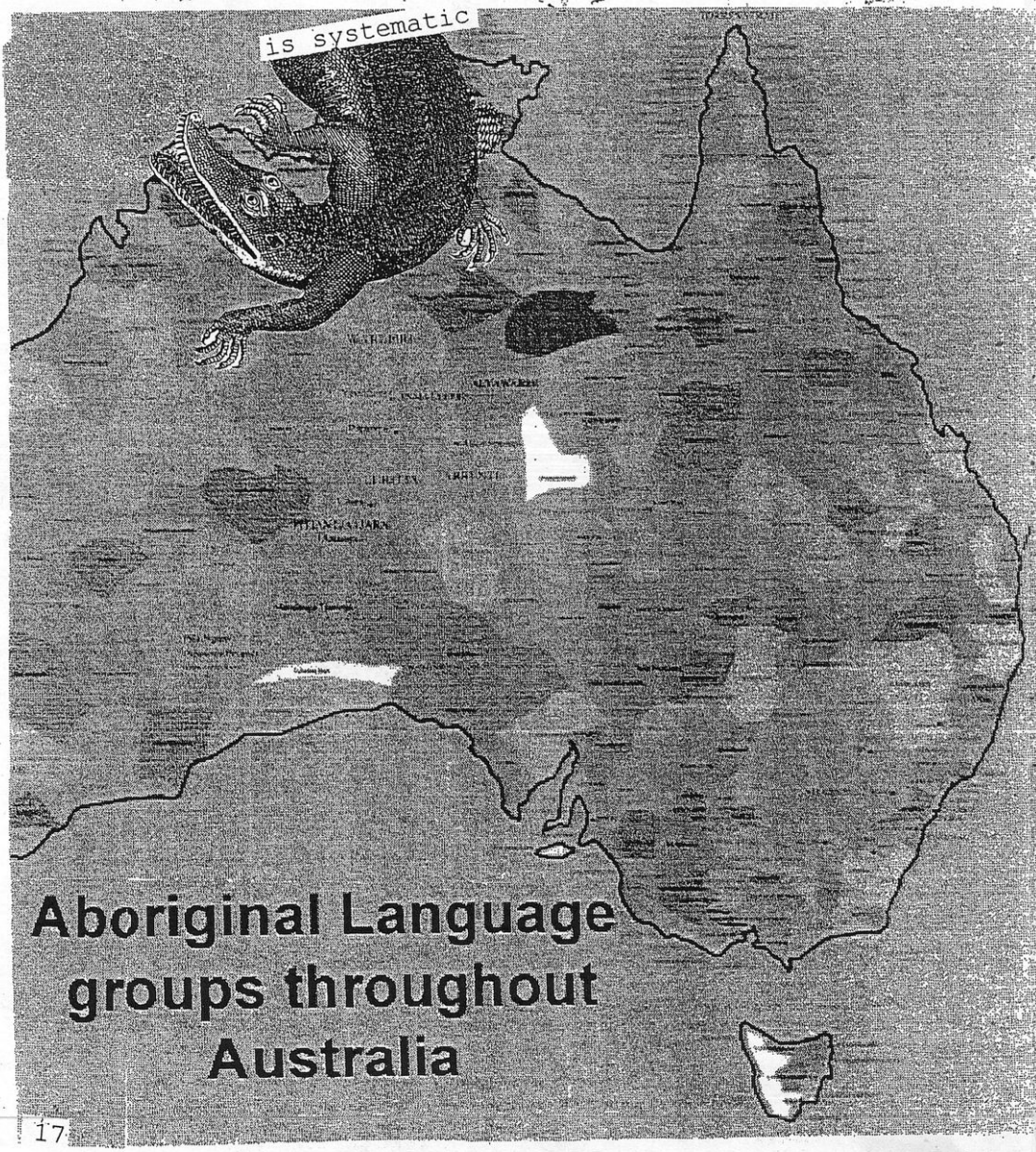
It is astounding how different perceptions of
the same reality can be.

And so astounding that we whities have so little understanding about the very land we come from.




*Aboriginal Reserves of the Burragorang Valley (Map by David Breakspear)*

Have you seen the map
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations
complied by David Horton.
I was so blown-away when I saw it for the first time,
only 4 years ago. I couldn't believe that I had grown up
in this country, with such little knowledge about the
Indigenous peoples whom it belongs to. I didn't know how many
nations there were, or how many language groups.
I thought I was just stupid, but I've since learnt that this
refusal to acknowledge Aboriginal experiences
is systematic



I'm on the train.
I just glimpsed 6 white police officers surrounding 3 Maori kids, sitting on the ground on the platform of Penrith station.
Being white makes me less suspect.
It makes me much less likely to be incarcerated.
This racism is systematic.
Despite Government enquiries and reports into black deaths in custody and representation in the judicial system, Aboriginal people still represent a huge percentage of the people incarcerated.
Almost half of the men in juvenile detention in NSW are Aboriginal.
Some would let this confirm their prejudices, say that black people are inferior to white people.
The reality is that white people make the rules for white people, and that people of colour are disadvantaged from the beginning.

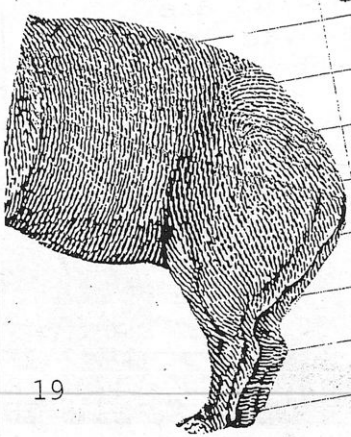
# Exercise #1

Write down 10 things you do every week.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Now imagine how those things you do every week might be different if you had a different skin colour.

How was it different?



This is such a great exercise.
It's really thought provoking.
I must admit, I found it really hard to imagine
not being white…
I imagine I'd get harassed more, feel less safe.
I probably wouldn't have the chances I've had in life.
Access to health, education and travel would be different
Structurally,
white people have better access to these services.
I probably wouldn't have my job, or be at uni at all.
It's frightening to realise that the meritocracy
you thought existed
is actually structured to favour
the privileged few.

"I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege,
as males are taught not to recognize male privilege.
So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white
privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package
of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day,
but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege
is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions,
maps, passports, codebooks,
visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks."
Peggy McIntosh 1988
In 1988 She wrote
"White Privilege:
Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"
about the daily effects of white privilege.
a list of 50 daily effects of white privilege. She writes
demonstrate the constant presence
of structural and social racism.

Here are the most poignant from her list (according to me).

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
3. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
4. I can be pretty sure that my neighbours in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
6. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
7. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
9. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
10. I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.
11. I can be casual about whether or not to listen to another person's voice in a group in which s/he is the only member of his/her race.
15. I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.
17. I can talk with my mouth full and not have people put this down to my color
20. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
21. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
22. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
32. My culture gives me little fear about ignoring the perspectives and powers of people of other races.
33. I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing or body odor will be taken as a reflection on my race.
34. I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
35. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.
36. If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it had racial overtones.
40. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
41. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me
42. I can arrange my activities so that I will never have to experience feelings of rejection owing to my race.
45. I can expect figurative language and imagery in all of the arts to testify to experiences of my race.
46. I can chose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.
47. I can travel alone or with my spouse without expecting embarrassment or hostility in those who deal with us.

The full list of 50 is available online

It really hit home for me how ingrained whiteness is, playing out constantly in all areas of life.
And what a privilege it is for white people.

Peggy McIntosh's list is pretty powerful, every one.
But how full on is number 21?

21. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.

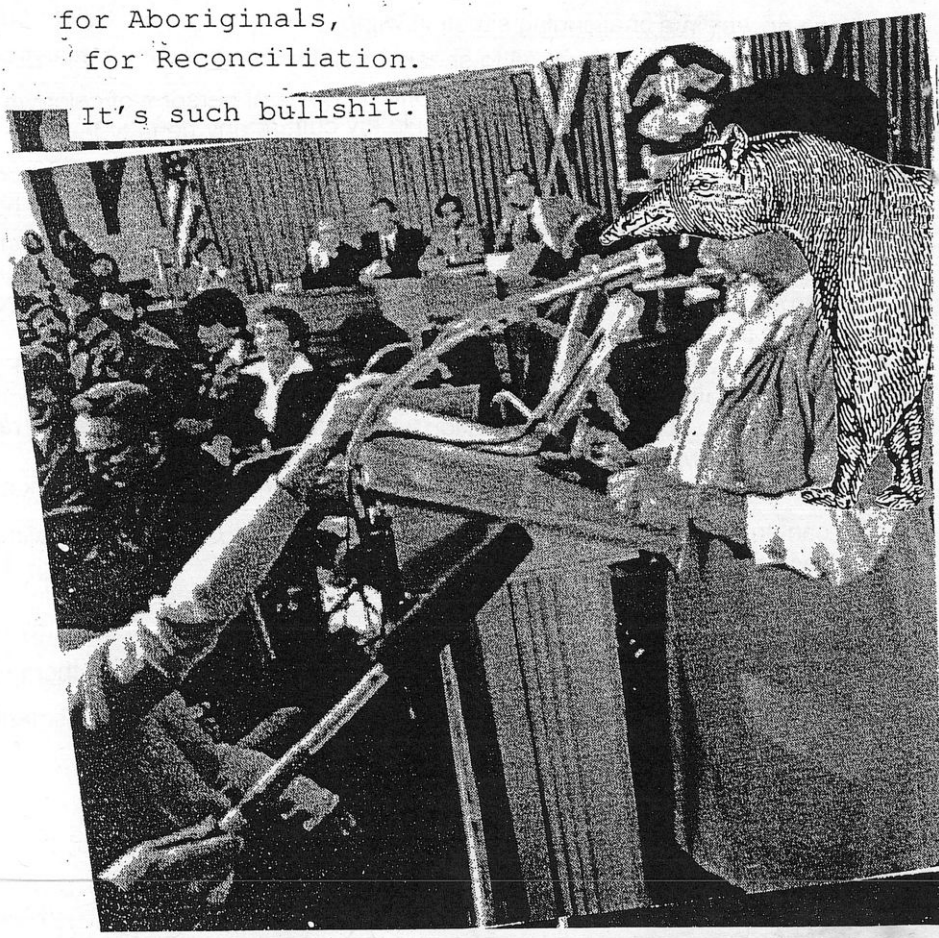
Being asked to speak on behalf of your whole race!
It's unthinkable for a white person.

"Hey Renata, what do white people think about
the nutritional value of chocolate cake?"

How should I know!

But for people of colour it's acceptable
to be questioned on behalf of your race.

In class we used the example of Cathy Freeman.
Ian Thorpe, for example, swims for Australia.
No question.
But Cathy Freeman, she runs for her race,
for Aboriginals,
for Reconciliation.
It's such bullshit.



I've learnt a little about how powerful language is.

A derogatory word or term may not seem that important in the grand scale of oppression. However the daily repetition of words inscribe it as truth.

For example, black men are often referred to as "boy". Their size is irrelevant. Even if they are full grown men, larger in size than the white person naming them, they may still be called "boy", because the term has nothing to do with their physical appearance.

It has everything to do with making someone feel small and insignificant. It denigrates black men and makes them feel as small and insignificant as the white man wants them to be. Repeated on a daily basis, such terms can inform who you are and whom you believe you can be.



See:
www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2004/aboriginalterminology.htm

Whiteness plays a dominant role in politics,

THREE GENERATIONS
(Reading from Right to Left)

alf-blood—(Irish-Australian father; full-blood Aboriginal mother).

uadroon Daughter—(Father Australian born of Scottish parents; lother No. 1).

ctaroon Grandson—(Father Australian of Irish descent; Mother No. 2).

The assimilation policy specifically promoted the assimilation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders into the white race.

This is eugenics, which is the belief in the improvement of the human species by encouraging or permitting reproduction only of those individuals with genetic characteristics judged desirable.

selective breeding.

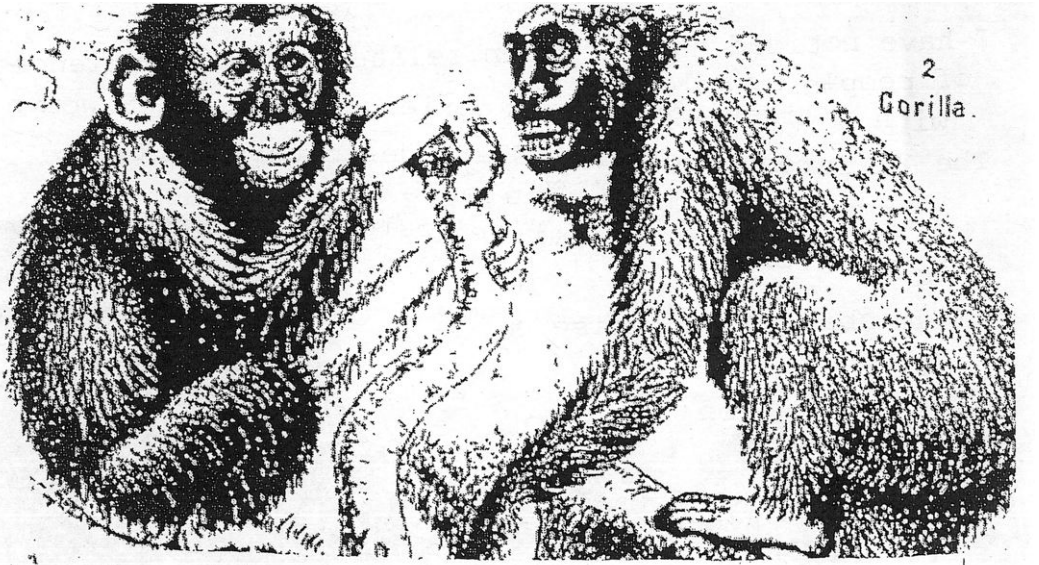
This might be reminding you of Nazi Germany, well it happened right here in Australia too.

•1937: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities:

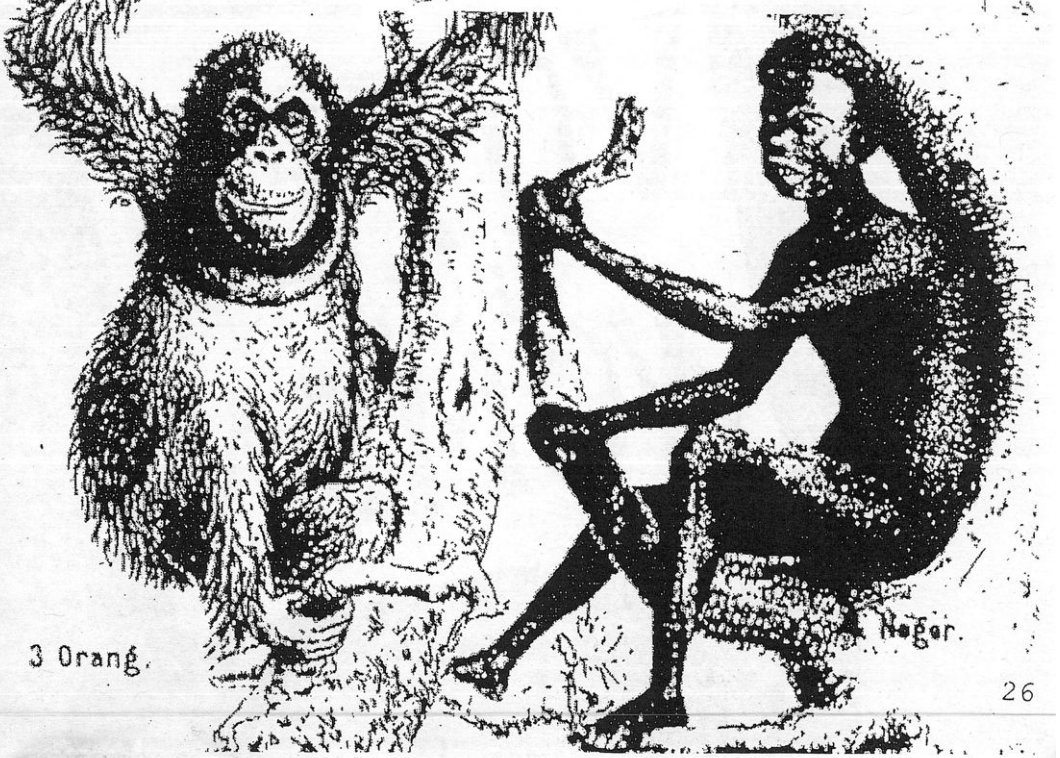
Major resolution:

'Destiny of the Race' declared

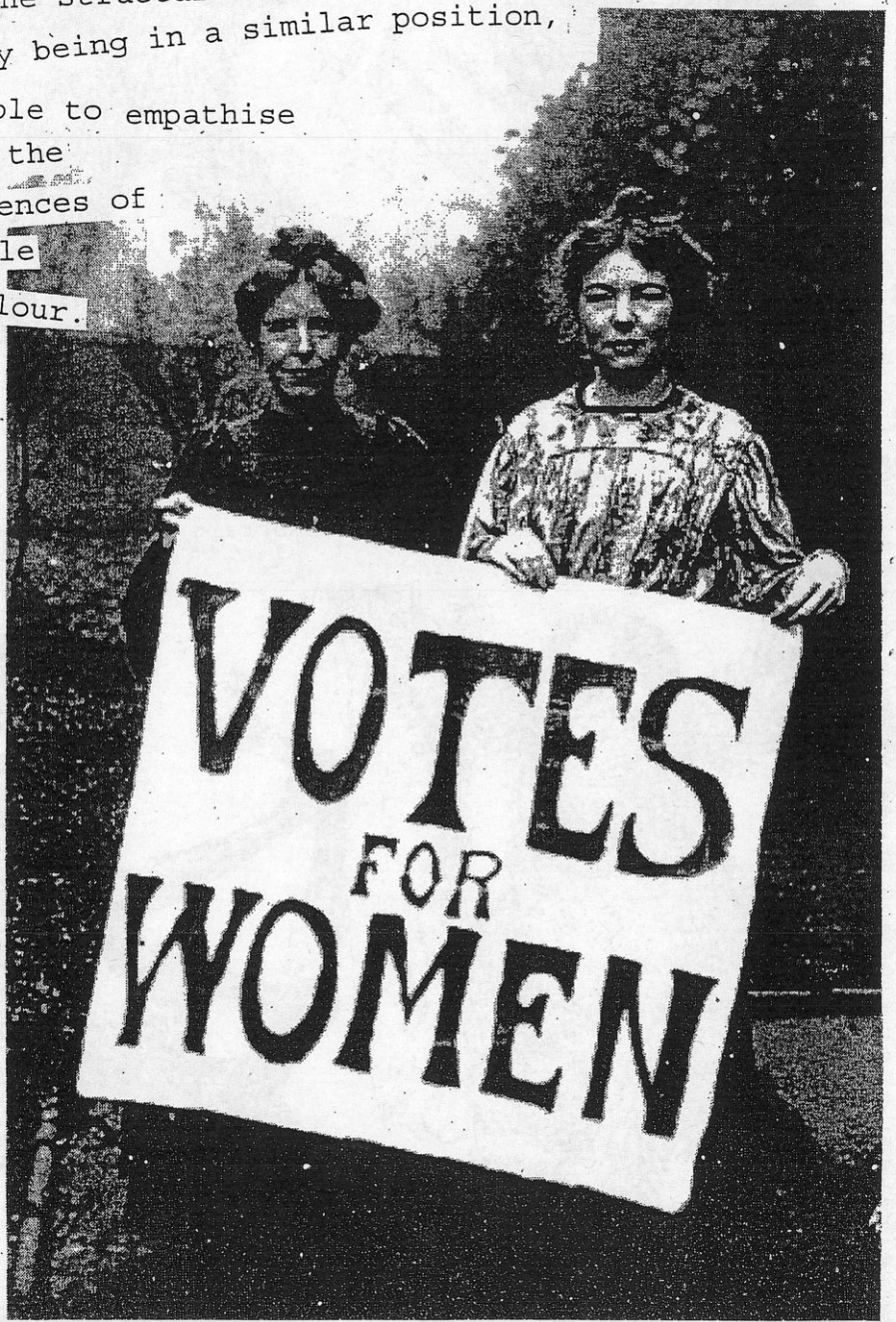
*'That this conference believes that the destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not of the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth, and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end'.*




The policies adopted by colonial administrations, and federal governments, as well as by settlers from British colonisation up until the 1970s constituted genocide against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

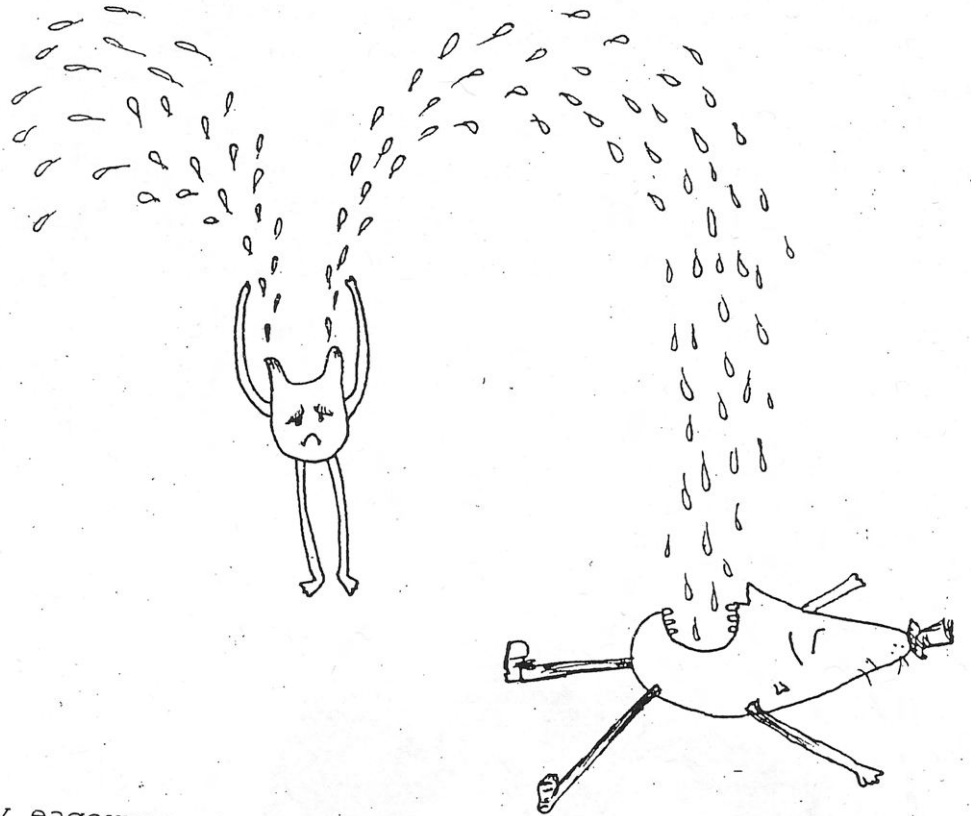


I have noticed that I often relate to the experiences of people of colour with a likening to my experiences as a queer womyn. The different oppressions are definitely linked by the structures that cause them, and by being in a similar position, I am able to empathise with the experiences of people of colour.



However this way of thinking is so problematic,

denying the experiences of people of colour.



My eagerness to empathise through my own experience comes partly from a place of denial or defensiveness.

"Surely I can't be oppressive, I myself am from a minority group

and understand how it feels to be oppressed."

This is so far from the truth.

It's hard to hear that by being you, brought up in a white family in Australia, acting the way you're told to; that you are involved in the oppression of other people.

But white people like me need to hear this.

The reading this week was called 'Thinking Through Race' by R. Frankenberg (1993).

It was all about the ways white womyn see race.

The first is existentialist:
the belief that there are essential differences between races, creating hierarchies between the races (whereby white people are usually at the top)

The second is a way that I used to think too, through colour- blindness.
People who are colour-blind refuse to acknowledge that they see the differences between people.

For me, it was based in some political correctness, attempting a separation from essentialist racism, believing that all people should be equal, and that by personally seeing people as such, it might eliminate that hierarchy. However, this perspective fails to acknowledge that there are unfortunate but very real differences in the ways in which white and black people are treated in society. By refusing to acknowledge the differences between peoples' appearances, colour-blind people ignore the different powers and privileges granted to people according to their skin colour.

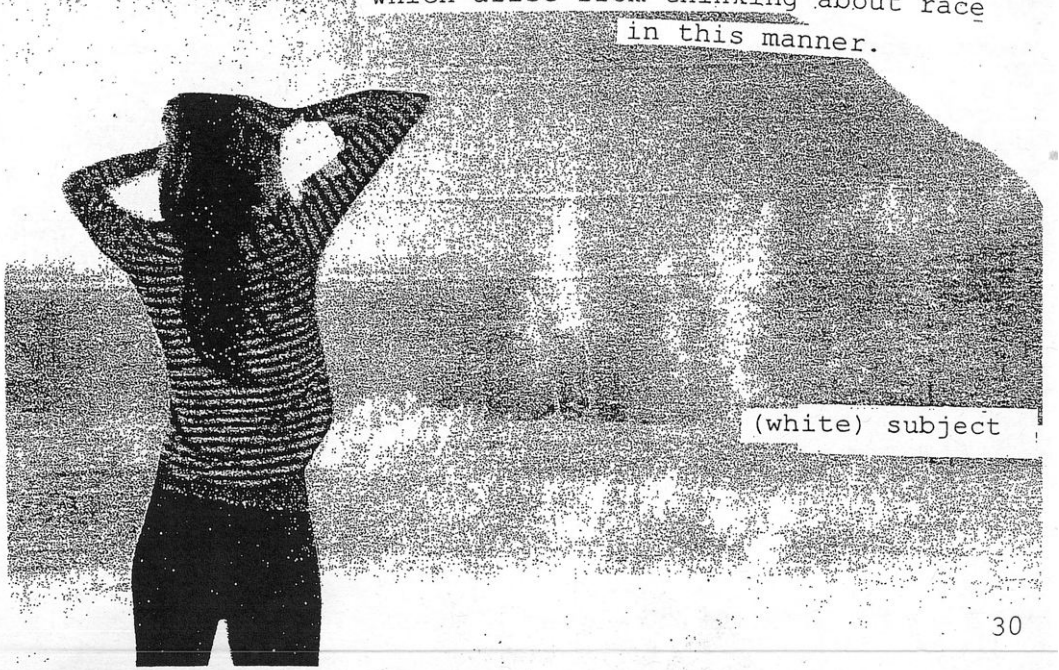
"The very use of the term "race" raises the idea of difference, for "race" is above all a marker of difference, an axis of differentiation."
(Frankenberg, 1993, p.138)

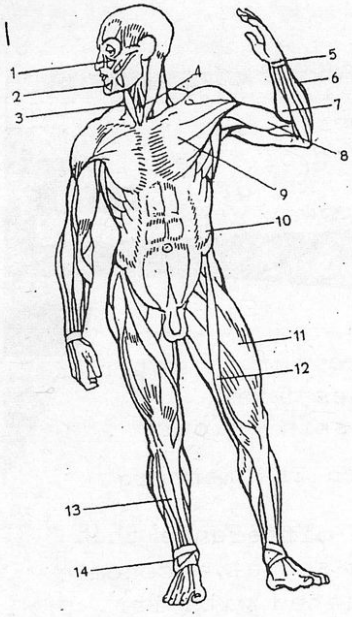
*"The idea that noticing a person's "color" is not a good thing to do, even an offensive thing to do, suggests that "color", which here means nonwhiteness, is bad in and of itself.... Color-blindness, despite the best intentions of its adherents, in this sense preserves the power structure inherent in essentialist racism."*
Frankenberg (1993).

I think that acknowledging someone's skin colour is not racist; racism is the judgement value, which arises from discriminating against people based upon skin colour.

The third way of thinking about race which Frankenberg describes, is called race cognizance.
And describes this acknowledgement of the difference that skin colour makes in peoples' lives; the social, economic and political privileges which are associated with it.

I think now that this is a much better way to understand race Seeing as race has been made into a huge difference, it needs to be acknowledged, as do the many ways in which racism plays out every day in order to benefit white people.
In the interviews that were done, there is lots of acknowledgement of new senses of self and privilege, which arise from thinking about race in this manner.






Whiteness is flexible.

This has become really clear to me.

Jewish people, for example,

are classed as white
in this society.

Yet little over 50 years ago,

they were prejudiced against

and killed, for not being white.

Greek people, Italian people,
were once not white.

Yet now, they are white and have been replaced
by another "other" to be fearful of.

This is pretty petrifying,

the social definitions could change at any time
to allow discrimination against yet another group

of people who are no longer
classed as white.

Middle eastern people for example,

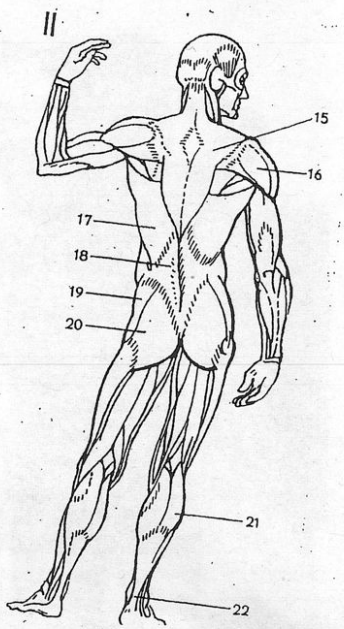
are currently the

antithesis of white,

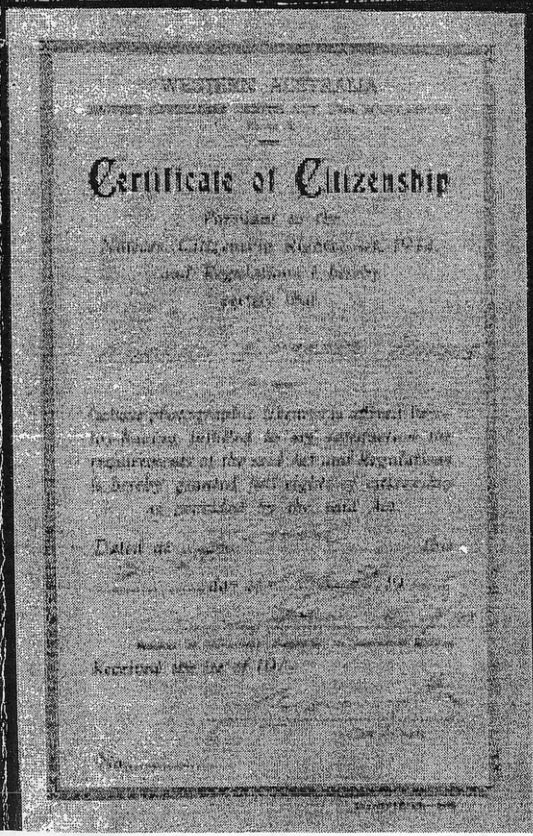
where 5 years ago,

the prejudice against them

was much less pronounced.

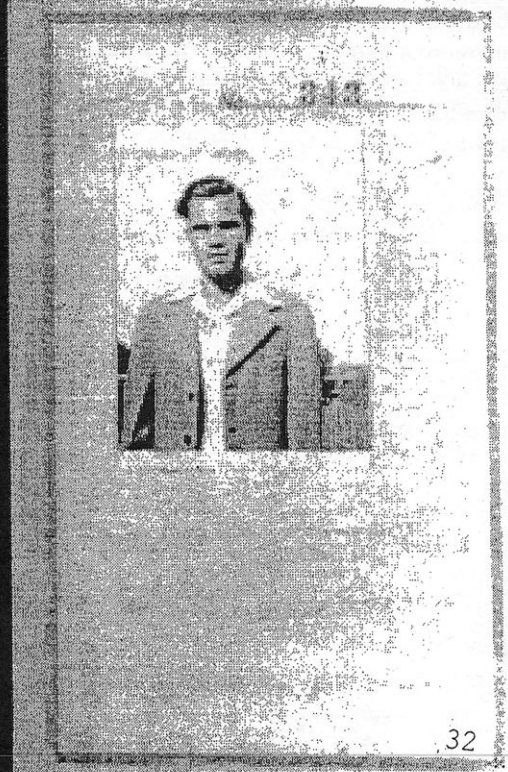


Another example of the flexibility of whiteness is the institution of the Aboriginal Passport in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Until 1967, passports were necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to be citizens in their own country; to participate in the economy, to work, to travel, to receive welfare. Yet they were conditional upon giving up their way of life, having connection to their land and family and speaking language. It was also conditional upon good health. Once granted, this passport could be taken away at any time, if the person were to be deemed undeserving, if, for example they visited their mother, or got sick. This re-enforces the elements of whiteness, that it is granted by the dominant group, it is changeable, it infers certain privileges, it ignores the needs of the "other" and it can be taken away at any time,

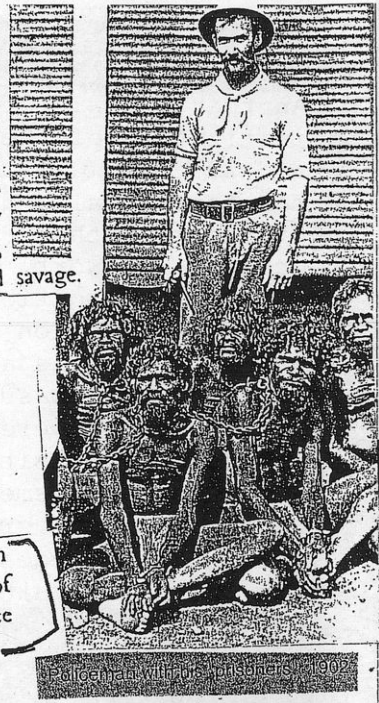

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Certificate of Citizenship

Pursuant to the



Representations of the Indigenous 'other' have circulated in white Anglo discourse since the 1700s. The most infamous was that given by Cook, who stated that the Indigenous people of Australia had no form of land tenure because they were uncivilised, which meant the land belonged to no one and was available for possession under the doctrine of *terra nullius*. This representation of the Indigenous other as the nomad justified dispossession. Since then we have been represented in many ways, which include treacherous, lazy, drunken, childish, cunning, dirty, ignoble, noble, primitive, backward, unscrupulous, untrustworthy and savage.



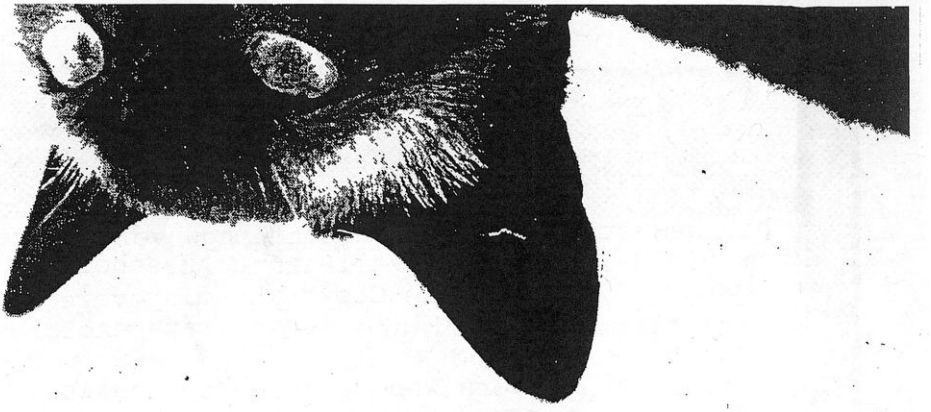
Policeman with Aboriginal Prisoners, 1902

In the guise of the invisible human universal, whiteness secures hegemony through discourse by normalising itself as the cultural space of the West. Sustained by imperialism and global capitalism, whiteness travelled culturally and physically, impacting on the formation of nationhood, class and empire (Frankenberg 1997a:2). It would be a mistake, however, to assume that whiteness is only found in societies inhabited and dominated by white people or that it functions only where white bodies exist. Whiteness is not just about bodies and skin colour; instead, it is 'more about the discursive practices that, because of colonialism and neocolonialism, privilege and sustain global dominance of white imperial subjects' (Shome 1999:107).

"The hegemony of Western whiteness continues to shape the future of the rest of the world. The USA, Britain and Australia's pre-emptive invasion of Iraq demonstrates that the East is now the new frontier for the white West. Despite the fact that there was no evidence to substantiate Iraq as a direct threat to Australia or Britain, Prime Ministers Tony Blair and John Howard were the first to join America and its 'war on terror'. Representing themselves as the holders of true humanity, these white Anglo nations positioned themselves as the liberators of Iraq bringing civilisation to an uncivilised people. "

Aileen Moreton-Robinson
Whiteness + Knowing. p. 76-79

AND, LIKE MANY ANOTHER TRIBAL PEOPLE, THEY COULD BE DEEPLY CARING ABOUT EACH OTHER, BUT HORRIBLY MEAN TO OUTSIDERS!!
OH...DID YOU CUT YOUR FINGER, DEAR?



# 1

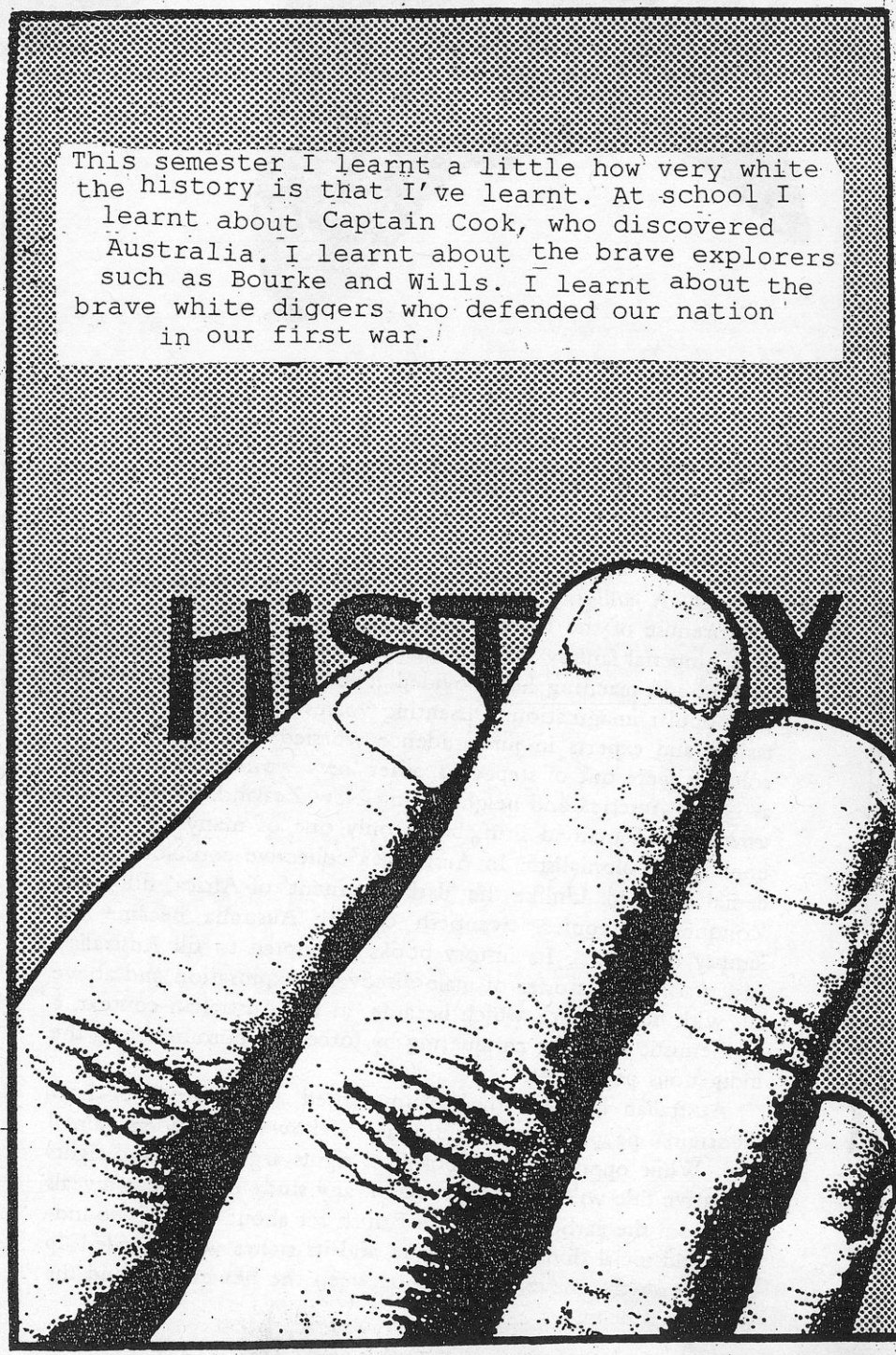
# A national story

TERRA *nullius*, or unoccupied land, was the legally endorsed premise of the British occupation of Australia. This convenient imperial fantasy has long shaped Australia's past, and history writing and teaching has provided it longevity in both law and the popular imagination. Dissenting voices were heard; humanitarians and experts in jurisprudence worried that the Australian colonies were out of step with other 'new world' countries such as North America and neighbouring New Zealand.[1] Nonetheless, *terra nullius* remained firm, being only one of many hypocrisies implicit in colonialism. In Australia a collective consciousness of denial emerged. Unlike the 'dark continent' of Africa, full of its 'conquered' peoples, twentieth century Australia became the 'empty continent'. Its history books attempted to fill Australia's vast spaces with stories of male discovery, exploration and above all, with 'settlement', which became, in the Australian context, a euphemistic term for conquering by force and outnumbering the indigenous population.

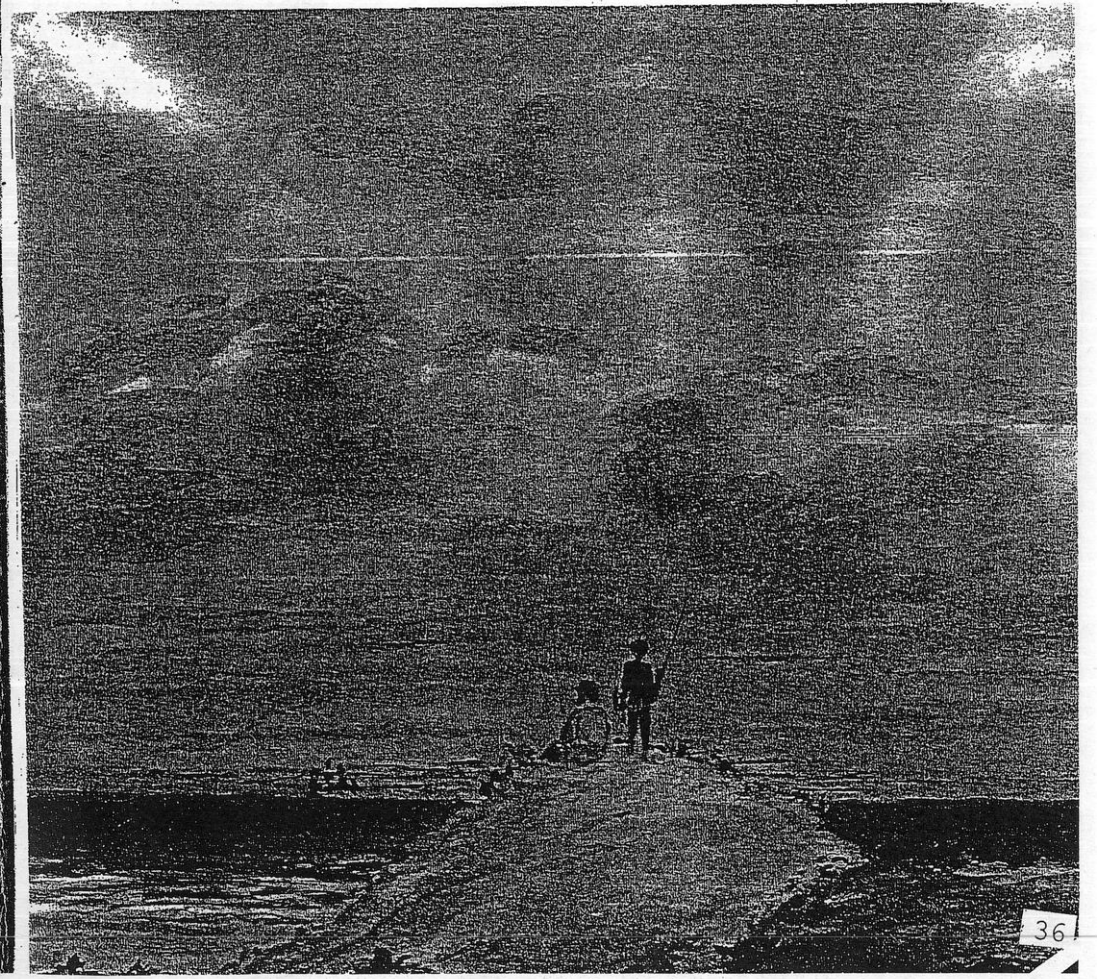
Australian history can be summarised as the story of how Aboriginal peoples lost a continent and how the invaders gained one. While opponents of Aboriginal rights argue that land rights or native title will divide the nation, any study of the past reveals that from the earliest times, the British set about creating boundaries and social divisions; the land and its riches were divided up in increasingly uneven portions between the newcomers and the Aboriginal people.

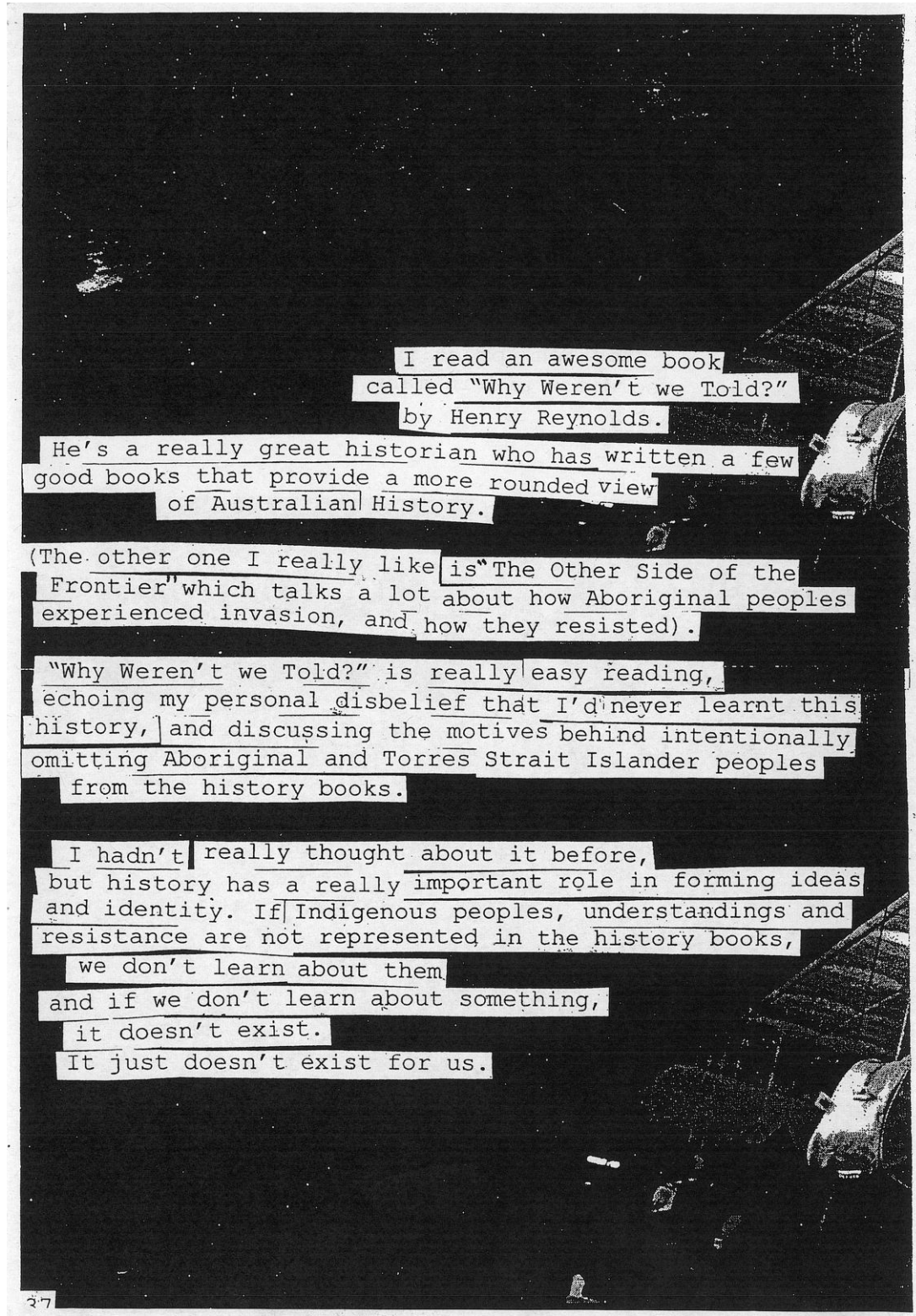


McGrath A. (ed.) (1995) "A National story" in *Contested Ground: Australian*
*[illegible] and the British Crown*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, pp 1-21


This semester I learnt a little how very white the history is that I've learnt. At school I learnt about Captain Cook, who discovered Australia. I learnt about the brave explorers such as Bourke and Wills. I learnt about the brave white diggers who defended our nation in our first war.
HiSTORY

I never learnt that Captain Cook invaded Australia,
despite the presence of hundreds of
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nation
I never learnt that there was widespread resistance to this
invasion, including years of warfare.
I never learnt that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
were forced to work as trackers,
stockmen, prostitutes, cleaners,
soldiers and in many other unpaid roles.
I never learnt this.




I read an awesome book called "Why Weren't we Told?" by Henry Reynolds.
He's a really great historian who has written a few good books that provide a more rounded view of Australian History.
(The other one I really like is "The Other Side of the Frontier" which talks a lot about how Aboriginal peoples experienced invasion, and how they resisted).
"Why Weren't we Told?" is really easy reading, echoing my personal disbelief that I'd never learnt this history, and discussing the motives behind intentionally omitting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from the history books.
I hadn't really thought about it before, but history has a really important role in forming ideas and identity. If Indigenous peoples, understandings and resistance are not represented in the history books, we don't learn about them and if we don't learn about something, it doesn't exist. It just doesn't exist for us.

I believe that the consistent oppression, dispossession and devaluation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over the last 220 years must be acknowledged when considering the current situation of Indigenous peoples in Australia.

Indigenous communities are not in crisis for no reason, and not only of their own making, but as a result of 220 years of genocide.

Attempts to eradicate exterminate and assimilate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders can hardly be called otherwise.

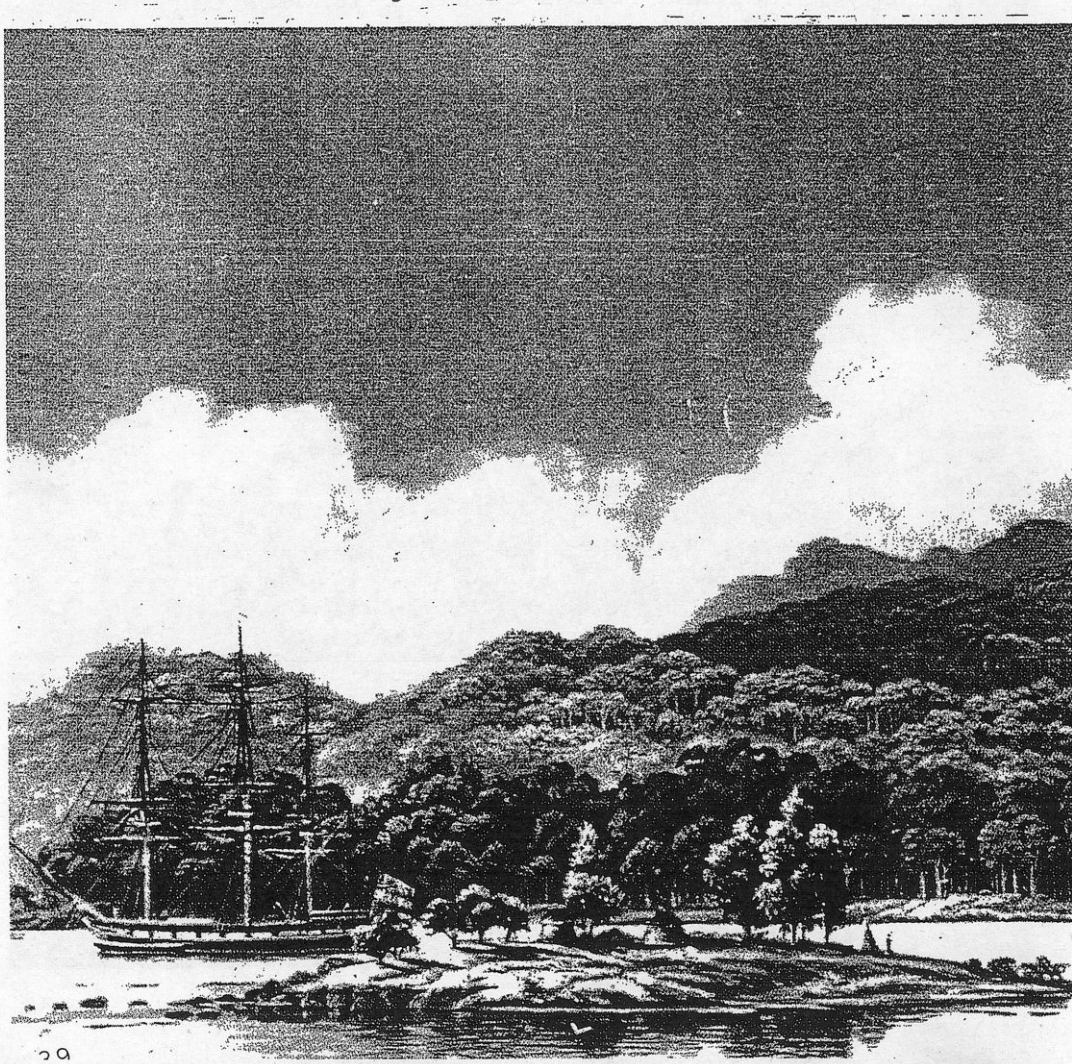
If we don't understand history, we can't understand the present.

"Why Weren't we Told" brings up some interesting ideas such as invasion vs. peaceful settlement, exploring why we learnt that Australia was peacefully settled,

"that the Aborigines were a uniquely peaceful, unwarlike people who offered no resistance to European incursion; that the settlers were able to occupy Australia without conflict; that ideas of warfare, conquest and invasion were therefore inappropriate for local circumstances."

(Reynolds, 1999).

These perceptions do not correlate with the evidence of bloody warfare and the consistent resistance to invasion by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which is still strong today.

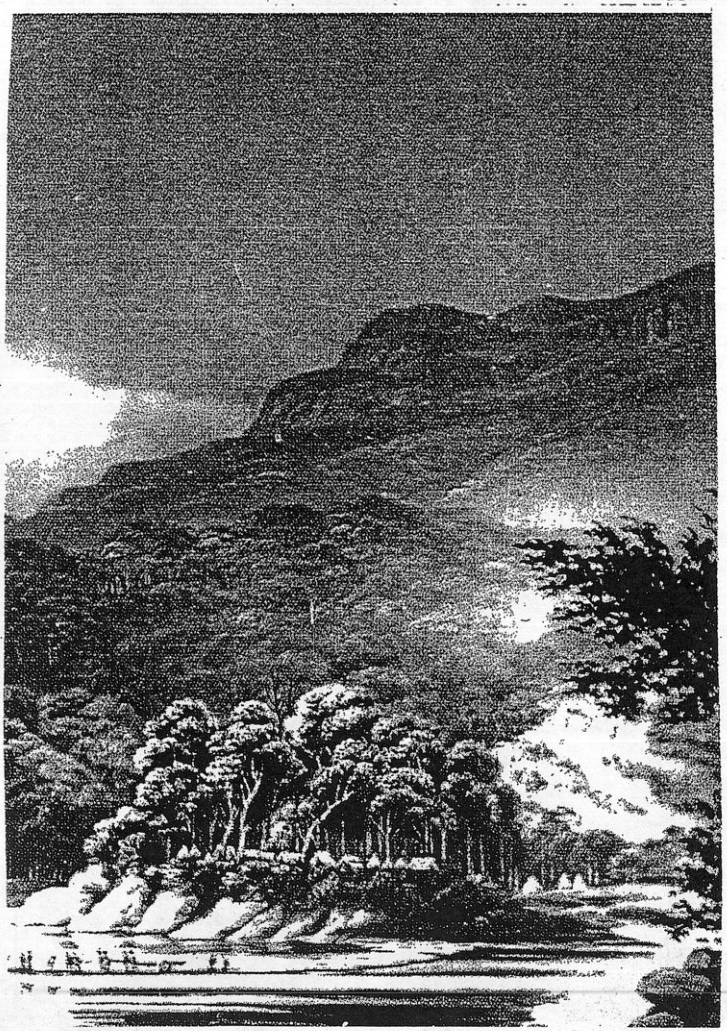


However, 'A clear sense of identity comes from who one is and where one comes from'. (Reynolds, 1999)

something I've learnt in the last few months is that this is not just a discussion that happens in the university library. If people learn this history, as they have, this white version of history, these assumptions, create identity and inform perceptions for both white people and Indigenous peoples alike.

> It is thus that each of us is dominated by history: the past lies upon us like a dead hand, guiding and controlling as if from the grave. At the same time as it gives the individual a conception of herself, an "identity," it piles weight upon her that she must fight to shake off if she is to remain light and free enough to continue reinventing herself.

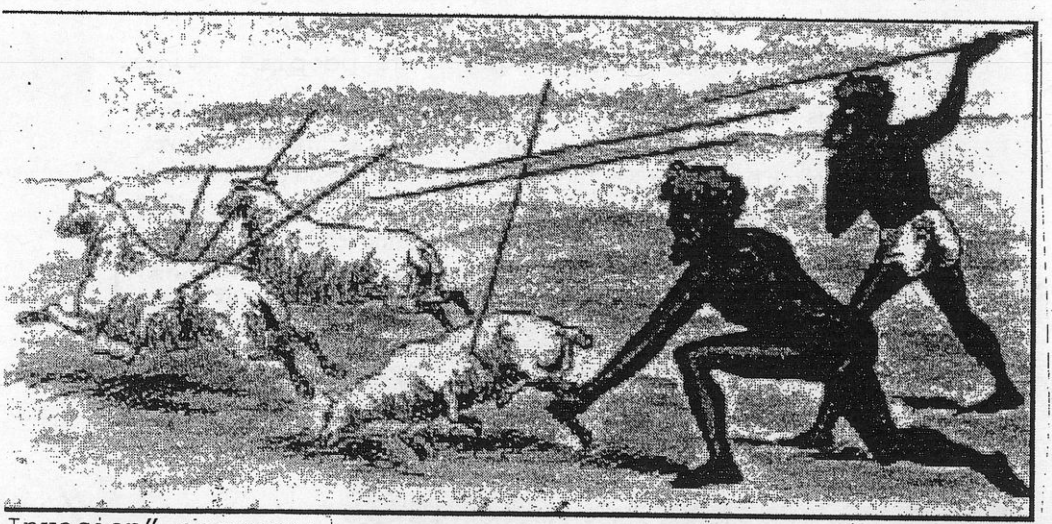
Crimethink. Days of love, Nights of war.



Generally, it is accepted that Australia was settled.

'Settlement" assumes;

-peaceful settlement
-terra nullius, that the land was uninhabited before white people came
-ignores Indigenous occupation of lands
-negates resistance
-white experience, silences the voices of Aboriginal peoples

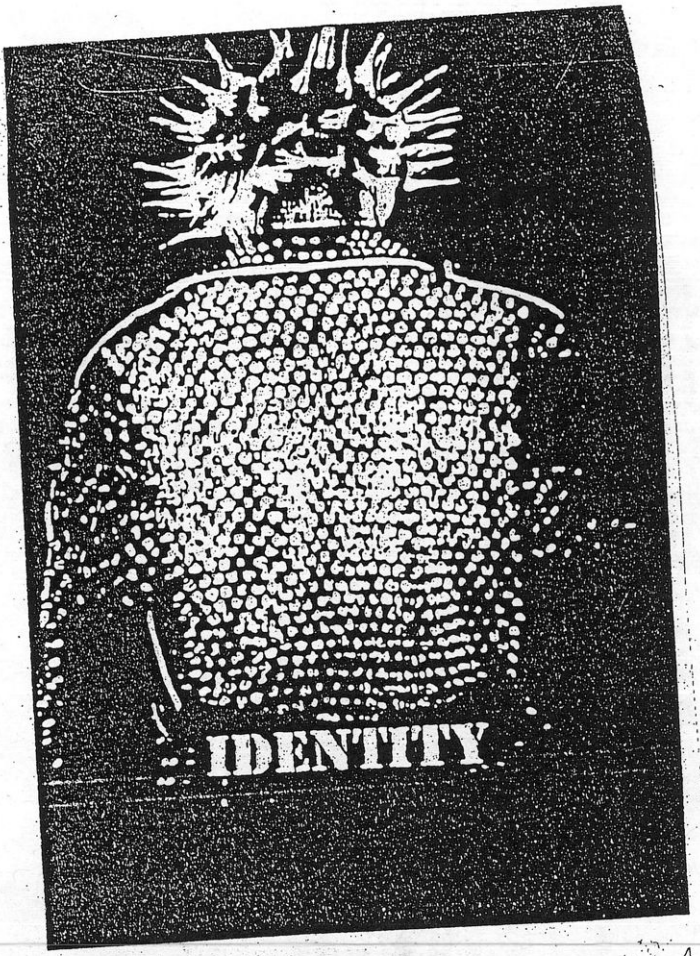


Invasion" assumes;

-resistance to the term Terra Nullius
-that the British invaded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander territory
-recognises resistance
-affirms occupation and land use
-acknowledges the experiences of Aboriginal peoples
-the land was stolen

This example demonstrates how much a term and an understanding of history can influence the present. I really feel that history is intrinsic to generating ideas and understanding the present, and that the dominant white histories have been intrinsic to creating the prevailing culture of whiteness, and oppression of Indigenous peoples.

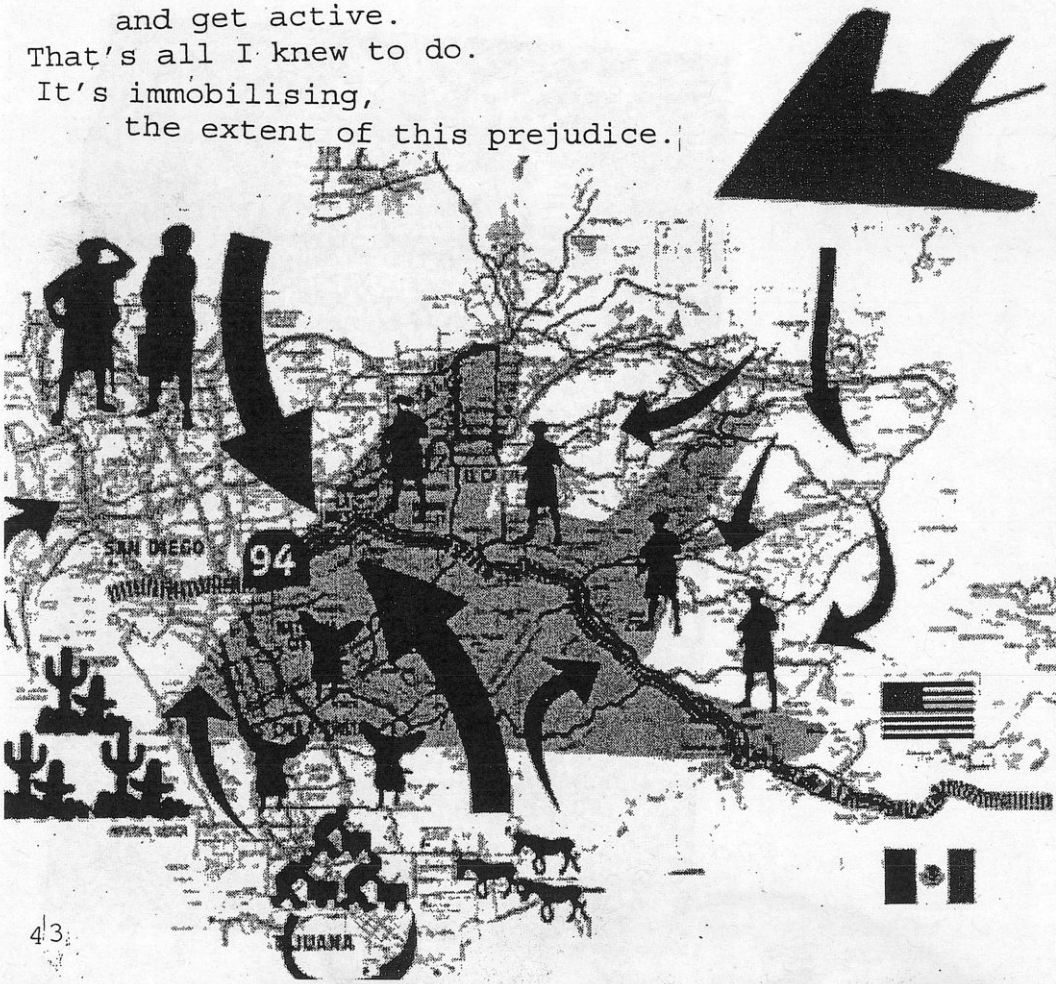
History forms identity.



I've sat on a bus, stopped at the border,
and watched 3 black men being dragged off, not allowed
to travel because of the colour of their skin,
because of the country the happened to be born in.

What do you do in that situation?
Run after them in solidarity?
Announce to the rest of the bus your horror?
Or cry against the dirty brown plaid curtains?

Get off the bus with a commitment
towards freedom of movement.
Find a refugee action group in your city
and get active.
That's all I knew to do.
It's immobilising,
the extent of this prejudice.

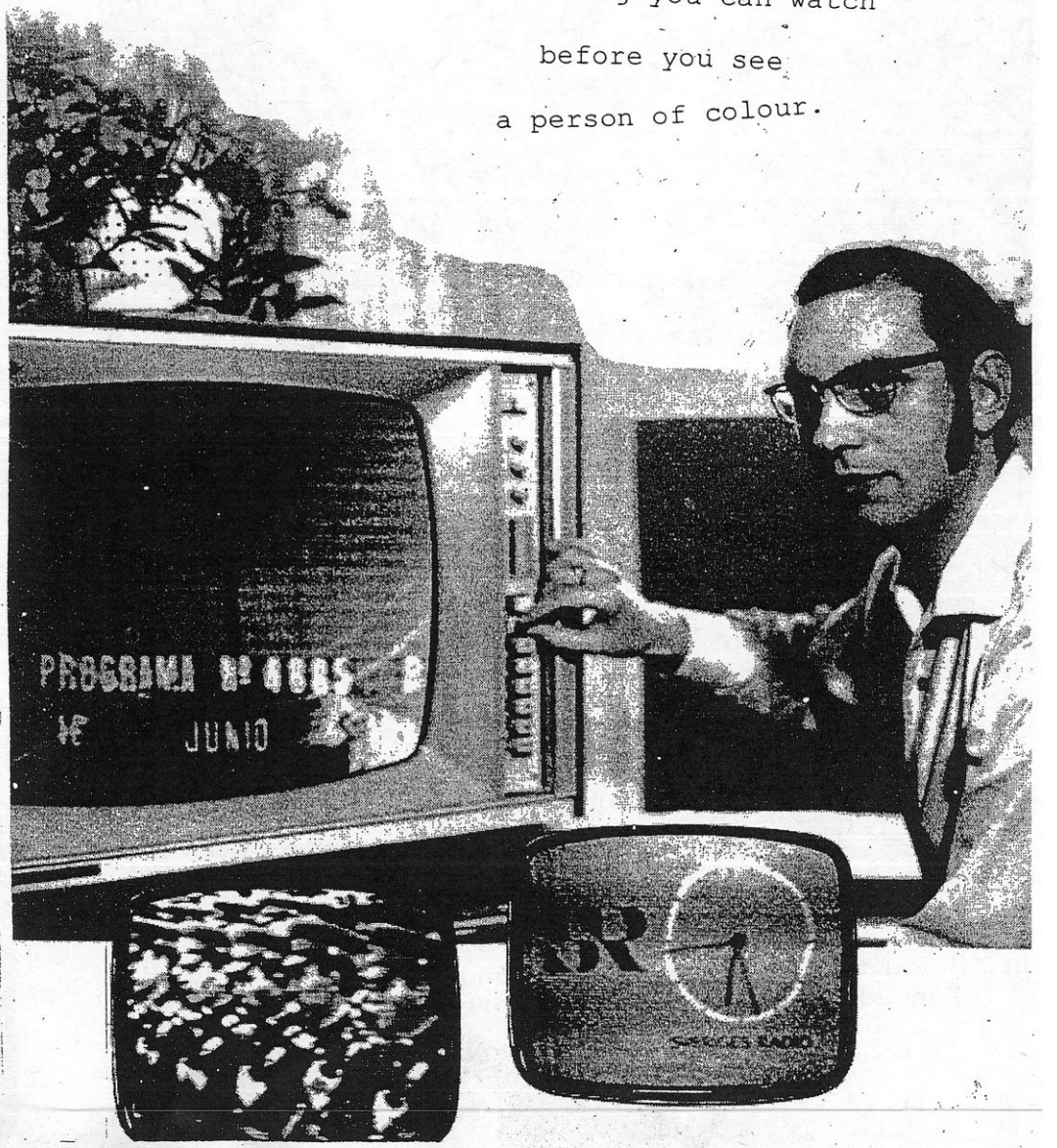


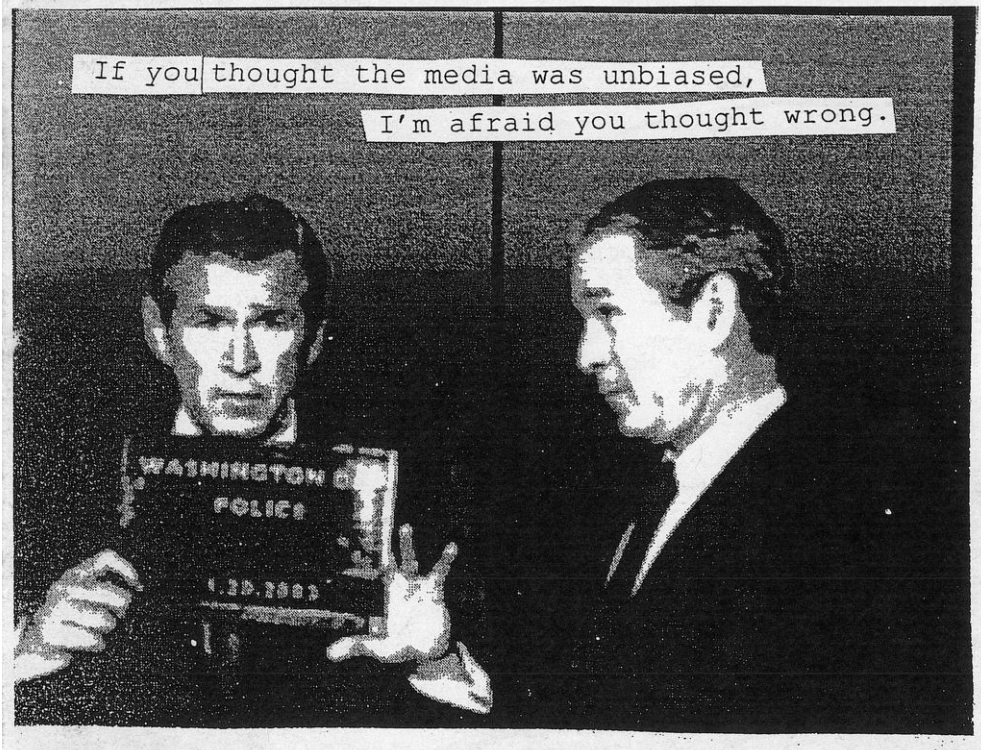
Exercise #2

Turn on the TV.

While you're watching,
take note what colour skin the people have.

Note how long you can watch
before you see
a person of colour.






I confess,
I hadn't really noticed how white mainstream telly is.
I can't believe it now, because it is so extreme!
At my Gran's house we watched for hours one night
before I saw someone who wasn't white.
Then there were suddenly a number of people of colour.
One was a black guy with dreadlocks, advertising the
newest shampoo which was so strong, it would clean
even his filthy hair.
Then there was an African politician, in the background
of a few more important white politicians.
Then there were 8 terrorist suspects,
of Middle Eastern decent.
What does that say about people of colour?
It's so extreme.
People of colour are dirty, they are marginal,
they are dangerous, they are uncivilised.
When I watch that I think this understanding hasn't
changed in the last 200 hundred years,
it's just become more insidious.
In some ways, I find this undercover racism even worse.
When it is less glaring, people don't notice it,
[illegible] and it's so much [illegible]

Exercise #3.
Analyse this advertisement.
visit www.au.kohler.com
and let them know what you think.

I hope you've enjoyed this.

I hope it has made you think,

and that you learnt something new.

For a full reference list please see my blog
http://growyourownfood.wordpress.com/
click on "whiteness" from the menu up the top.
There are lots of great books in the list that are certainly worth a read!

The Aboriginal Embassy, Canberra, 1972.